Slave Harem in the Labyrinth of the Other World

151-200

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Chapter 151 - Shrine Maiden

The next day. I [Warp] to Bode's castle after the breakfast.
I take the Alba and the Earring of Offerings off.
The Sacred Spear is already inside the Item Box.
These equipment are not suitable for an Adventurer nor there's any need to put on luxury items.

"The leader is inside."

The knight at the reception indicates with his hand when I show up.
It seems I can enter without permission, like always.
I enter and knock on the office's door.

"Come in."
"It's Michio."
"Oh, Michio-dono? I'm glad you came. Gozer will be here shortly."
"Okay."

I go in.
He is alone in the office, sitting behind the desk, doing paperwork.
Gozer isn't here at the moment.
I hate to be with the Duke without Gozer present.

"I'll try to finish my work before Gozer comes back. By the way, I was thinking of inviting Michio-dono's party to the dinner. What do you think?"

Oh no.
Which reminds me that the Duke had his eyes on Roxanne.
Didn't he give up?

"After all, I want to meet the party members that Gozer praised."

Damn it.
It seems he still has his eyes on her.
Is there no way out? I won't accept it.
Even if she were to become Lady Omone Cha, or Lady Cha Omone, the concubine of Tokugawa Ieyasu; I would not let go of Roxanne.

“But I don’t know the table etiquette.”
“Etiquette won’t be a problem when there’s no audience.”

So it’s a problem when there’s audience?

“But my party members are all slaves.”
“I don’t mind. Even this house has slaves employed.”

It’s not a problem?
I wonder if the Duke and slaves eat together.
Because he said there’s no problem, there’s nothing else I can say.

“Is that really alright?”
“Michio-dono has helped me a lot, I have to Invite your party to the dinner, of course.”
“Haa”

It’s a valid reason.
There’s no room for argument.
Help me, Gozeraemon.

“How about tonight’s dinner?”

This is going too fast.
He’s hasty as ever.

“I need time to make preparations.”
“There’s no problem even if you attend in normal clothes. There’s no need for preparations.”
“Even if you say that-”
“Then tomorrow? No, it won’t be possible since I have plans for tomorrow’s dinner. How about the evening after tomorrow?”

I have succeeded in postponing it by two days.
It’s something.
But I don’t know whether it was a good idea to postpone it or not.
It can’t go worse, I guess.

What if he passes away?
It’s possible since the Duke enters the labyrinth.
Well, I’m at more risk than him.

“Let me see.”
“Nope, don’t I have plans with Cassia for the day after tomorrow? A dinner with the Countess, if I remember correctly? Actually, isn’t that in three days? Err, there’s no problem with the evening after tomorrow, I guess.”

The Duke mutters.
Will Cassia be joining us, too?
Since there will be five of us, I don’t think the Duke will be hosting us by himself.
The couple will be hosting us, it seems.

I can’t refuse a dinner with Cassia.
Or rather, I want to have a dinner with her.
There will be no problem if we will be having the dinner together. I will be able manage it.
He won’t be able to ask for Roxanne in front of his wife.

“I don’t mind if you are insisting this much.”
“Do you accept then?”
“Excuse my intrusion.”

After I accept the dinner invitation, the door opens and Gozer comes in.
You are late.
I have already accepted the unreasonable demand of the Duke.

“Gozer, Michio-dono has accepted the dinner invitation. It will be the evening after tomorrow.”
“……Did my Lord forget? I will be going to the Imperial Capital the day after tomorrow.”
“Oh, that’s right. You of all people. Cassia has plans in three days and it will be inconvenient for me tomorrow. Michio-don, how about the dinner tonight, after all?”

The Duke’s unreasonable demands are not over yet.
Apparently, Gozer has some business the day after tomorrow.
It seems Gozer will be joining us at the dinner, too.
That’s good for me as well.

“It will be fine in a few days.”

“But.”
“I will do something about my plans. Although I will be asking too much of the other side, it should be fine tomorrow. I will go to the Imperial Capital tomorrow. As for the dinner with Michio-dono, there will be no problem the evening after tomorrow.”

Gozer has compromised.
The ordeal was Gozer’s this time around, too.
He really is a man of the world.
You really are a good friend but your Lord is incompetent.

“I see. My bad.”

The Duke is so swift.

“I am really sorry.”

I also lower my head in apology.
I don’t think I am the one in the wrong here, though.

“No, no, don’t concern yourself with it, Michio-dono. It’s not that important a business.”
“Then Michio-dono, I will be having you for the the evening after tomorrow.”
“Very well.”
“Well then Michio-dono, please take a seat.”
“Sure.”

Gozer insists me to sit on the guest’s sofa.
Gozer takes a seat, too, facing me.

“Actually, it’s regarding the Palmasque mirror. It’s quite difficult to obtain it in the territory, so it has become a favorite gift. Furthermore, the special decorated frame made in Talem of our territory, its value outside the territory is high, too.”
“I am really glad to hear that.”
“Some of them even asked if we are willing to sell the mirrors. Although we are using them as gifts, the request this time came from someone who is difficult to refuse.”

Is there really such a person?
Looks like that person is more influential than the Duke’s house.

I guess there's always someone, who is hard to turn down, for everyone.

"I see."
"If we are to sell the mirrors, we need to increase the stock. We must secure a reliable source of supply, so that we can get one immediately if we need it urgently. In this regard, we had a discussion. We have decided to prepare the Adventurers from our house to be able to go to Palmasque. If we prepare several Adventurers, it will perhaps be possible to go as far as Palmasque."
"It will be possible."

Gozer is honest.
I wouldn't know if he kept quiet.
Is it about letting them through to the source?

"It's okay even if you don't answer right now. When you visit the day after tomorrow, can you please tell me if it's fine with you or not?"
"Will it be okay till the day after tomorrow?"
"I am really sorry, especially since we owe Michio-dono. On the day after tomorrow, please bring as many Palmasque mirrors as you can with your party members; I will buy all the mirrors."

So, what you mean is, it will be the last time you will be buying the mirrors from me?
If the Duke's house manages to secure a source of supply for themselves, I will just be in the way.
There will no longer be any need to pay higher, buying from me.

There is also the honor of the Duke's house.
If they are going to officially deal in the mirrors, dealing with an Adventurer of unknown origin will not be in their favor.
Also, it will be troublesome for them to summon me every time.

So, will that be the end of the mirror peddling?
It is not like I am troubled with that.
If you are worried that I am concerned, I am not.

After the conversation was over, I leave Bode's castle.
I head back home and have Sherry do some smithing.
Roxanne is doing the laundry, Miria is doing the dishes after the

breakfast and Vesta is doing the cleaning.

“Isn’t the housework tiring, Roxanne?”

I ask Roxanne while she was drying the clothes.
I think it’s better to talk it over now.

“Not at all, it’s fine.”
“I was thinking of hiring a person who can do the housework while we are in the labyrinth.”

Hiring a person, it’s more like increasing the number of slaves.
A very beautiful slave doing the housework.
I will be able to hire a beautiful maid to do the housework.
Roxanne most likely understands what I am thinking about.

If I manage to increase the number of slaves, there will be many ways to increase the income.
If I am going to lose the option of selling the mirrors to the duke, I will need to find other ways to earn.
Or I can ask Gozer to let me continue selling the mirrors the same way as before.

If I don’t increase the number of slaves, the mirror business is as good as gone.
However, because the revenue from the labyrinth increase has increased, there shouldn’t be any problem.
Lately, I have been able to get a gold coin upon selling the items to the guild with 30% Up.
Also, I still have that white gold coin.

“No, it really is fine. There is no problem because we divide the work.”
“Really?”
“We don’t want to trouble Master in any way. We can do all the housework by ourselves.”

I have been completely rejected.
It means Roxanne didn’t get my plans at all.
It will not be a good idea to keep on increasing the number of slaves without a justified reason.

I don’t want to force it on them either.

I can have up to six party members.
Roxanne hasn’t objected to it thus far.
So, does that mean I can have only one more member?
I better choose carefully.

“What do you think, Sherry?”
“As things are, I don’t have any trouble, so I don’t think there’s a need to employ someone.”

I have been rejected coldly.
However, in another words, I can employ one if you are troubled?

“What do you think, Miria? If I hire someone who can cook while we are in the labyrinth, we will get to eat delicious fish dishes.”
“I will cook, desu.”

I have been rejected by Miria, too.
Even fish couldn’t bait her.

“Vesta?”
“I think we will be fine without hiring anyone.”

She’s such an airhead.
If all the members are against it, there is no way I can forcibly go against them.
From now on, should I check with my finger if there is any dust speck left?

And then, if Roxanne-san wasn’t able to clean it properly…
I would employ a new maid-san to clean since she wasn’t able to clean.
If I do that, I will be able to increase the number of slaves, right?
I can’t become fraught with emotion.

After waiting for the laundry and the cleaning to be finished, we enter the labyrinth.

“I plan on changing Roxanne’s job to Shrine Maiden. Although I’m not worried for it’s Roxanne, be more careful at the start.”

I switch Roxanne's job to Shrine Maiden as soon as we enter the labyrinth.
Miria's Assassin is Lv29.
Initially, I was intending to do it when she reached Lv30 but it has been going well.
I thought of going to Palmasque as it might be the last time.

However, the MP consumption of [Warp] increases depending on the number of people, the weight of the object being transported and the duration of use.

The last time, it was terrible when I went to Palmasque after adding Miria.
This time, it will become even more terrible with the addition of Vesta.

Because it has become increasingly difficult to level up, there shouldn't be that much difference between this time and the last time.
My MP has probably not increased that much either.
It means I will be carrying Vesta with the MP that hasn't increased much.

That said, I can at least try and see if I'm able to do it.
For now, however, I will do what I can do. I change Roxanne's job to Shrine Maiden.
Shrine Maiden has an effect Small Increase in MP.
Because the effects of all the party members are shared, my MP should increase a little.

I can also switch other members to Shrine Maiden but that will make the party weak.
Because the job effects increase with level, there's no use even if I switch them to a low level job when using [Warp].
If I designate Roxanne as a Shrine Maiden right now, her job Lv can increase from 1 to 20 in a mere day or two.

Later on, I can also choose Medium Increase in MP as the effect of Jobless.
My MP will increase with that, too.
It'll be good to set it just before going.

The only problem is, I won't be able to recover (MP) in the labyrinth, heading back with the mirrors.

"I will be a Shrine Maiden? Thank you very much."

Roxanne shows motivation toward Shrine Maiden.
It's a good thing.
I select Alchemist and cast Plating on Roxanne.
Because Shrine Maiden is only Lv1, I can't allow any mishap to befall.

"Just in case, I will teach you the incantation Area of Effect Healing skill."
"Okay."
"To relieve those who err is the Shrine Maiden's《Priest's》prayer《spell》."
"Umm, to relieve those who err is the Shrine Maiden's prayer."

The name of both the Priest's and the Shrine Maiden's skills is the same, so the skill incantation should be the same.
If I remove Incantation Omission and invoke the skill, the incantation should float up inside my head.
I teach that to Roxanne.

It should also appear inside Roxanne's head, though.
It's my turn, however, since I can somehow handle Brahim with ease.

"It may be difficult to use in the middle of a battle."
"I guess so. It may be difficult while dodging but I will try it."

I know the difficulty of casting spells while running.
However, I can invoke [Rush] and [Overwhelming] while fighting monsters.
There may be a slight difference between the skills in respect of the difficulty of use.
There is no other way but to try and see if it is feasible or not.

Two Scissors Lizards appear.
She seemed to be listening to me when I said to take it easy at the start.

The four of them start running.

“Since it’s her first time, Miria, Vesta, you will be taking care of the enemies.”
“I think it will be alright.”

She declines.
Roxanne crams into the vanguard.

“Err”
“Vesta, take on that one, please.”
“Understood.”

Looks like the vanguard team listens to Roxanne instead of me.
Roxanne and Vesta clash directly with the Scissors Lizards.
Miria thrusts the Estoc of Petrifaction from the side.

“Those who err……”

Roxanne gets interrupted in the middle of the incantation.
The Scissors Lizard swings it’s scissors down.
Roxanne withdraws from chanting the incantation in order to dodge the monster’s attack.
Chanting incantation seems difficult while dodging.

“It’s relieve.”
“Thanks, Sherry. To relieve those who err is the Shrine Maiden’s prayer.”

She didn’t get it?
It looks like she didn’t withdraw from chanting the incantation in order to dodge the attack.
Roxanne has now chanted the skill incantation.
She lightly dodges the next attack of the Scissors Lizard.

“Did it, desu.”

The Scissors Lizard, which Roxanne was keeping company, gets petrified.
We encircle the remaining one and finish it off.

“It looks like I can cast Area of Effect Healing while fighting

monsters. At least, there will be no problem if I'm fighting one monster."
"That's good to hear, really."
"You stood in line with the waterfall in order to acquire Shrine Maiden; I think it's thanks to that."

Sherry interjects.
I see.
She means that it's possible with Shrine Maiden because the concentration of mind is a requirement to acquire the job.
It's well balanced.

"If I can grasp the flow of the area of effect magic attack of a monster as a whole, I will probably be fine no matter how many I'm against."

I think it's impossible, though.
For normal people, at least.
Roxanne seems to have awakened a strange ability.

Chapter 152 - Area Effect Healing

Next, Roxanne guided us to a place with two Scissor Lizards, two Ma Bream, and a Rtoll Troll in a group.
We'll need to be careful.
This type of group doesn't worry you?
Maybe it's just a coincidence that two Scissor Lizards were in both groups.

Four people start running.
I use [Sand Storm] twice, and then follow them.
Even though I've trained my mind to get the Priest job, it doesn't feel like my magic is any easier.
I don't think I'd be able to use an incantation while dodging demons attacks.

It's difficult to use skills while running.
I use magic when I stop, and then start running again.
The three vanguards face off against the demons.
Sherry stays in the back.

The Scissor Lizards are at the front, so the chance of the area effect magic being used is small.
Cancelling the magic takes a little while, but them using magic in rapid succession is rare.
With just two Scissor Lizards, we should be fine.

If there were five Scissor Lizards, they might have used the area effect magic before coming into range of Sherry's spear.
Some of them would be stuck at the back if there were five of them.
The area effect magic is a higher probability if they are in the second row.
The only thing they can do at the back is use magic.

The difficulty has increased quite a lot when coming to this floor.
On the 23rd floor, the Scissor Lizard uses area effect magic.
Rtoll Troll and Ma Bream from the 21st and 22nd floors appear a lot too.

The Scissor Lizard will still use area effect magic as we continue up to the 24th floor.
When we get to the 25th floor, the Scissor Lizard, and the demon from the 24th and 25th floors will all use area effect magic.
We need to be prepared for a lot of area effect magic.
It must be hard moving towards the top.

Should I stop exploring on the 23rd floor?
I don't particularly have any reason to go to the upper floors.
I can make enough money on the 23rd floor.
It's enough if I don't buy slaves one after the other.

In regards to strength, I already defeated the guy who picked a fight with Roxanne.
I won't have a problem getting to Lv50 on the 23rd floor, so I can get the Adventurer job sooner or later.
The 23rd floor should be fine.

Why do I keep advancing up in floors?
If there is a mountain, you must climb it.
That's probably it.

I'm going up in floors because there is a labyrinth here.
It's a bit different from curiosity or ambition, it's just that there is a labyrinth there, so I want to explore it.
But, I might stop as the floors get harder.
There's no real reason to keep going.

If there's no problem, I should keep advancing.
After all, the upper floors do allow me to earn more money.
The upper floors are stronger, and will strengthen us faster as well.
I'll go up if there is a chance.

Still, I need to do it carefully.
There's no reason to over do it.
The risks increase as we go up.
After I decide that we can easily handle the current floor, we'll probably go up.

Roxanne is in the front, taking on a Scissor Lizard.
Miria is taking on another Scissor Lizard.

Vesta is keeping an Rtoll Troll busy.

Disregarding Roxanne at Shrine Maiden Lv1, it's good judgement to have Miria take on the other Scissor Lizard.
Because of Rtoll Troll's weakness, it will be the last one standing, but Scissor Lizard is stronger than Rtoll Troll.
It's better to petrify a strong demon.

The lizard swings it's scissors down.
Roxanne dodges easily, and thrusts at a Ma Bream with her rapier.
You'll even take on a Ma Bream that came to the front row?

Scissor Lizard and Ma Bream start attacking Roxanne at the same time.
Roxanne skillfully evades both.
It's hard to complain when she's doing so well.

"I did it, desu."

The Scissor Lizard in front of Miria is petrified.
Now the front row is back to one on one.
Even though I thought that, Miria goes around the side of the petrified Ma Bream and attacks the Ma Bream in the second row.

"It's coming."

A magic formation appeared below a Ma Bream.
Ma Bream don't have area effect magic.
For now, I'll move away from the area behind Roxanne.
It's dangerous behind Roxanne's back.

Ma Bream spits water.
The water doesn't go towards Roxanne, instead, Miria is attacked.
She's quite close.
Miria can't avoid it, and get's bathed in water.

"Are you alright?"
"Yes."

I called out, but she seems to be alright.
Miria will be fine if it's just one magic attack.

“May I use area healing?”

Roxanne asks.

“Sure, you can experiment with it.”
“Okay, To relieve those who err is the Shrine Maiden’s prayer.”

Roxanne easily used [Area Healing].
While evading the Scissor Lizard, and the Ma Bream, she spoke the incantation.
Even while being attacked by two opponents, she didn’t have a problem.

Since it’s only Miria who has received damage it’s a bit of a waste, but it’s good practice.
We only needed [Area Healing] once, the first demons to be defeated are the Ma Bream’s.
Next is the Scissor Lizard which had been petrified.
Then the other Scissor Lizard, and the Rtoll Troll last.

“It seems to be fine even if two demons are your opponents.”
“Yes. If you can see the flow of the demons attacks then there is no problem. It would be easier if I was talented.”

Roxanne answers.
Her MP seems a bit low.
Is that as much as Shrine Maiden Lv1 can handle?

The demon is defeated, and Roxanne has become Shrine Maiden Lv2.
I don’t think MP recovers when you get a level up though.
That’s how it was for me.

“It might be hard at first, but it will be easy when you get used to it, Roxanne.”
“Yes, Thank you.”

If Roxanne doesn’t have talent, then nobody does.
I seem to have awakened a strange ability.

“How is your MP?”
“Magic for skills? It might be a bit low.”

“Managing MP is important work. You need to have enough left for emergencies. Please make sure you don’t overuse area healing.”
“I understand.”

I made Roxanne use a strengthening medicine for now.
I used Monk to finish healing Miria.
We continued exploring when Miria had recovered.

Roxanne’s Shrine Maiden level went up again.
It’s going well.
With every battle it feels like it’s going up.

When Roxanne became Shrine Maiden Lv5, I stopped using Alchemist.
Plating is probably unnecessary already.
I’m still worried, but Roxanne hasn’t received any attacks yet.
It seems my worry is unfounded in Roxanne’s case.

There was no area effect magic either.
Were we lucky, or did Miria’s petrification help?

Miria became Assassin Lv30, and the chance to petrify seemed to increase.
Petrification goes off in the next battle.
Miria normally fights a Scissor Lizard, so it’s a Scissor Lizard that gets petrified.
He can’t use area effect magic if he’s petrified.

I think Miria would rather fight the Ma Bream.
She didn’t complain about fighting the lizard though.
The strength of the Scissor Lizard and the Ma Bream is different, so it’s better to petrify the Scissor Lizard.

I don’t know if that’s what she’s thinking.
She probably just wants to go back to the Ma Bream floor.
The items dropped are probably her only goal.
Those thoughts are normal.

We explored until evening.
We finished a little early, and I prepared the bath.
After getting out of the bath, Roxanne begins to put on her white

outfit instead of the usual camisole.
It's the outfit from the waterfall line.

"The white clothing?"
"Yes, since it dried well, I was thinking of using it as pajamas."

It seems to have dried without staining or losing shape.
I didn't consider reusing it as pajamas.
It's a high class item.
It shouldn't go to waste.

It might seem odd, even in the dim bedroom.
It's not transparent either.
It may have the same feel as a silk nightgown though.

I thought something like that before too.

The white clothes are good.
They are wonderful.
They'll be good pajamas.

It's good.
It's good.
This is good.

I quietly insert my hand through the opening in the front.
This feeling of conquest.
This feeling of immorality.

The white clothes which were shut, come open.
This seduction.
These loose clothes.

They are made so my hand can move about freely under the silk.
This smoothness.
This softness.

I feel an impossible weight in my hand under the silk.
Fruit in my hand.
A hill in my hand.
I catch the mountain in my hand.

I don’t need Sex Maniac now.
Fight.
I’ll fight.

The beast.
I will become the beast.

Stand.
I’ll stand.
Until I burn white hot.

At noon the next day I went to Bode.
Of course, I will fight again tonight.
I used [Warp] to the adventurers guild instead of the castle, and went to the amber merchants place.

“Hello, how can I help you today?”

When I enter, the amber merchant greets me.
He seems energetic as well.
When I lose the mirror work, I probably won’t trade amber again either.
Well, Sherry has been the one negotiating in Palmasque.

“Can I get some uncut amber again?”
“Yes, I can do that straight away.”
“I’d also like an amber necklace that suits her.”
“Certainly.”

I indicate Vesta, and the amber merchant gives us a bow and goes to the stores interior.

“A necklace?”
“You’re doing well in the party. It’s a reward. Roxanne and the others have one too.”
“Okay, Thank you.”

We were told our regular clothes were fine, but they can wear their necklaces to dinner with the Duke of Harz.
It would be bad if only Vesta didn’t have one.
I go further into the store an sit on a chair.
The amber merchant comes back.

“I have eight stones of uncut amber.”
“I’ll take them all.”
“I think this necklace will match the customer, how is it?”

The merchant pulls out an amber necklace.
The necklace has some very big amber stones side by side.
It’s quality looks considerably good.

“It looks good.”
“It’s beautiful.”

Roxanne also agrees.

“It’s a necklace with large pieces of amber, and good workmanship. The shade of the amber is light, and I believe matches her well.”

Amber of this shade matches Vesta’s light brown skinn well?
That’s probably true.

“That’s right.”
“Yes. It’s beautiful.”
“Well…”

The necklace is held close to Vesta.
The depth of colour is similar to vesta’s skin.
It’s shining too.
Roxanne gives it a nod.

“Even though I regret to part with an item like this, since you’re a special customer I’ll give it to you for 50,000 nars.”

You’re an amber merchant, I’m the one who has to part with something regrettable.
It’s not a bad item though.
But at that price?
50,000 is the same as Roxanne’s necklace.

“It’s a good, beautiful necklace.”
“I think it suits her.”
“Beauty, desu.”

All three of them agree.

If nobody is complaining, there shouldn't be any problem with it.

"What do you think Vesta?"
"Is it alright? It's amazing."
"It's fine. I'll get it for you then."
"Yes. Thank you."

I pass the necklace back to the merchant.
He places it in a small wooden box.
The uncut stones and the necklace are bought with a 30% discount.

"We'll return to the house next. Vesta hold onto it until then."
"Okay."

I pass the small box to Vesta.
I'm holding onto the uncut stones.

"Are we going to Palmasque now?"
"No, we'll do that tomorrow."

I put them into my rucksack instead of giving them to Sherry.
I plan to go to Palmasque tomorrow.
I want to raise Roxanne's Shrine Maiden level more before then.
It would be good to raise it until the last minute.

Chapter 153 - 24th Floor

The next morning. We reach the boss room of Haruba's 23rd floor.
The labyrinth seems to be expanding with every floor.
With the monsters becoming stronger and the area expanding, it took us a while to find the boss room.

Most of the monsters that appear on Haruba's 23rd floor are weak against Earth magic.
So the exploration went smoothly.
It might have been even quicker.

"The Scissor Lizard boss is called Mother Lizard. It's the same as Scissor Lizard: weak against Earth magic and resistant to Fire magic, that is. As for its distinguishing feature, it can give birth to a monster. Because it's not a magic skill attack, it can't be cancelled by Incantation Interruption. If it gives birth to multiple monsters, the situation will turn dire, so we'll have to be careful. Also, because it's 23rd floor, there will be two accompanying monsters."

Sherry briefs.
Now that's some terrible enemy.
Incantation Interruption won't work?
It would be an easy pass, indeed, if Incantation Interruption could cancel every attack.

"We'll use the same strategy we used against the Black Diamond Tuna: we will separate the monsters because we can't use Incantation Interruption. For it's our first time, I'll have to ask of you to confront the boss, Roxanne."
"Understood."

To tell the truth, I would like Miria to take on the Mother Lizard.
For we can't use Incantation Interruption, we can only rely on Miria petrifying it.
However, since it's our first time facing this enemy, our best bet is the one with the highest battle ability who happens to be Roxanne.

Because Roxanne's Shrine Maiden is now Lv25, there won't be any problem.
Also, we don't know as to how resistant the boss of 23rd floor is to petrifaction.

There's another option, which is to give Estoc of Petrifaction to Roxanne, but it's better for Miria to use it due to the constitution of Assassin.
Should I have made Roxanne Assassin and Miria Shrine Maiden?
Nothing can be done about it now.

"Vesta, take this."
"Okay."

I hand Durandal to Vesta.
Everyone rushes into the boss room.
Smoke gathers; three monsters appear.
In the centre is the Mother Lizard. On both of its sides are Ma Breams.

We are lucky that the monsters that came out are Ma Breams, not Scissor Lizards.
Nope, inscrutable are the ways of heaven.[1]
So I can't say that we are lucky.
It may be a weaker enemy but we can't be careless.

I cast two Sandstorms and use Abnormal Status Resistance Down on Miria's opponent.
The Mother Lizard is a bipedal lizard, same as the Scissor Lizard.
But there are no scissors.
The moment it emerged, it came under the baptism of Earth magic.
It didn't seem to like it for it's glaring at me.

A red magic formation appears under the Mother Lizard.
Geh
It's a magic attack.

Because our strategy was to separate them, it can't be helped.
Had we made our move the moment it appeared, we would probably have made it in time.
I better arrange another weapon with Incantation Interruption ASAP.

That said, I can't prevent the Mother Lizard from giving birth to a monster even if I have another weapon with Incantation Interruption.

"Here it comes."

Sparks start dancing; my body starts heating up.
My chest constricts; my joints start hurting.
I curl my body up to mitigate the feeling of pain.

Its area of effect magic attack seems to be more powerful than the Scissor Lizard's.
It's the boss, after all.

When we were under the magic attack, the Ma Breams approach us, preparing to attack.
Miria wards one off while Vesta repels the other.
We have avoided them.

The Mother Lizard comes over and attempts to head butt Roxanne.
It doesn't need to mentioned that it didn't hit Roxanne.
If it's a normal attack, there's no need to be worried.

"Did it, desu."

Miria thrusts her Estoc of Petrifaction into one of the Ma Breams and petrifies it.
That was quick.
Leaving the petrified Ma Bream aside, Miria turns around and goes behind the Mother Lizard.
I cast Abnormal Status Resistance Down on the Mother Lizard.

"To relieve those who err is the Shrine Maiden's prayer — Area of Effect Healing."

While dodging the attack of the boss, Roxanne chants the incantation to Area of Effect Healing.
Sherry was within the area of effect. Because she keeps running around, attacking; it's not a given, so I'm grateful that she was able to be healed.

Including the management of MP, I have left the discretion of use to Roxanne.

“Did it, desu.”

After a short while, the Mother Lizard gets petrified.
That was even quicker.
The combination of Assassin and Abnormal Status Resistance Down seems great.

The only one capable of moving now is a Ma Bream.
The four of them encircle the fishkin.

The Ma Bream collapses right after.
Vesta was the one to deal the finishing blow.
The Ma Bream that Vesta was keeping company died even before the petrified Ma Bream. It must be thanks to Durandal.
However, that Miria was able to shut them out doesn’t necessarily mean that it was thanks to Abnormal Status Resistance Down.

“Vesta, the sword, please.”
“Yes.”

Now that only the petrified monsters are left, I take Durandal back from Vesta.
I first take the Ma Bream out before finishing the Mother Lizard off.
I wanted to see the place where the Mother Lizard gives birth to a monster but I don’t want to willingly experience it.
Ah, there’s a whole fish.

“Whole fish, desu.”
“It’ll be for tomorrow’s dinner.”
“Okay, desu.”

Miria jumps at it and brings it over.
It’s good that she didn’t insist on fatty tuna for the celebration of clearing the floor.
I put the whole fish in my Item Box.

“Sherry, will it be safe for us to move on to 24th floor?”
“Of course. There shouldn’t be any problem.”

When I try to enquire Sherry, she returns an assertive reply.
If it’s Sherry’s opinion, there shouldn’t really be any problem.
Asking for the opinion of the other three would serve no purpose.

“With Master here, there won’t be any problem.”
“Do, desu.”
“I think it’ll be alright.”

This is why I didn’t ask for the opinion of these three.

Oh well, now that Sherry has no objection, should we proceed then?
If we fail, we will simply have to improve our strength.
We are moving up just one floor, so I don’t expect us to get wiped out right away.
If push comes to shove, I can use all the recovery medicines in my Item Box to weather the storm.

“Let’s move on to 24th floor then?”
“The monster native to Haruba’s 24th floor is Cyclops. It’s weak against Wind magic and resistant to Fire magic. It can use Fire magic. It’s also threatening in close quarters combat due to its menacing physical attacks.”

Sherry briefs.
It’s weak against Wind magic?
Should I switch the skill to Jobless to Basic Wind Magic then?
Although we can fall back to 23rd floor, I think we should challenge it.

While stepping into 24th floor, I switch the skill of Jobless.

“Can you please guide us to a place with fewer Cyclopes?”
“Okay, understood.”
“Since it’s our first time, please be careful.”

I give instructions to Roxanne.

“It should be close by, right?”

Roxanne guides us to the right.
I wanted the place to be nearby because I wanted to expedite.
Will it be alright?
Thus far, we haven’t encountered any problem because we have been prudent with our first times.

After advancing for a while, we encounter a group of three

Cyclopes.
It's a reddish-brown giant with one eye.
One huge eye in the centre of the face.
So this is the Cyclops, huh?

The four of them start running while I cast two Breezestorms.
When the wind starts blowing, the Cyclopes stop and shut their eyes.
They stand still in the same posture for a while.
When they open their eyes, they restlessly move their faces about and confirm their surroundings.

Ah. It's their weakness, evidently.
To have big eyes doesn't seem to be a good thing.
If that's the case; I should, rather than casting two Wind spells at the same time, delay the second spell a bit.

Thereafter, I cast Breezestorms with a slight interval in between.
I alternately cast Wind spells of Jobless and Wind spells of Wizard.
The Cyclopes stop moving whenever the wind starts blowing.

The four of them close in on the monsters in the meantime.
The spear and the swords strike.
Cyclops is one size larger than Vesta.
It's a giant, after all.

While I cast Breezestorms, they close in.
That I'm casting two spells alternately, there's little room for the Cyclopes to attack.
They occasionally swing their arms which Roxanne dodges.

"Did it, desu."

Moreover, one of them is down.
Eventually, We take all three Cyclopes out.
When the smoke dissipates, clumps of metal were left.
Copper, to be specific.

So, will three monsters not be a problem?
Or will it be a problem?
A dropped item is a part of the body of a monster, after all.

It’s foul play that the body of the monster contains metal.

“Copper, huh? Did you guys have any problem in attacking them with swords?”
“No, we didn’t have any problem. We’ll be fine even if our opponents are Cyclopes.”

Oh well, I didn’t expect any different from Roxanne.
Miria was able to inflict petrifaction once which helped us a lot.
However, considering the skill of petrifaction, it may not be the same every time.

“Whether we’ll be fine or not depends on whether we can take care of five Cyclopes or not. We’ll fight and see. Copper is the material used in making equipment. It’s even more important than leather. Although it’s difficult to treat, I’ll try my best.”

Sherry says something positive again
I wonder if she has experienced some sort of spiritual enlightenment.
Or perhaps, she just assumes defiant attitude when she wants.

“Five Cyclopes?”
“Five Cyclopes and Scissor Lizards.”
“This way then.”

Although I would like to observe some more, we have observed once already.
Now that everyone is motivated, I can’t not be motivated.
Roxanne guides us.
A group of three Cyclopes and two Scissor Lizards appears.

“As expected.”

Now that I think about it, wouldn’t it be better if I just specified the composition of three-to-two monsters?
The four of them dart forward.
I follow them after casting a Breezestorm.

“Here it comes.”

A red magic formation appears under one of the Scissor Lizards.
Sparks start dancing.

Fire magic engulfs us.
Like I thought, if there are five monsters, there'll be more instances of the area of effect magic attack, huh?

Roxanne halts and casts Area of Effect Healing.
Dodging the attacks while running seems to be difficult.
Even if you dodge the attacks of the monsters while running, using Area of Effect Healing in conjuction is difficult, surely.

Miria and Vesta take over the vanguard, and confront the monsters.
Vesta takes on a a Scissor Lizard.
The Scissor Lizard that used area of effect magic attack is still in the back row.
The Cyclopes, that stop moving every time a wind spell is cast, are further behind.

The monsters are scattered all over the place.
However, this scattered positioning is not tactical.
Only Sherry here has a weapon with Incantation Interruption.

Vesta and Miria surround the Scissor Lizard which Sherry was keeping company.
Roxanne, who was a little late, takes on the Scissor Lizard that was likewise late.

"Did it, desu."
"Here it comes."

The moment the Scissor Lizard gets petrified, a magic formation appears under one of the Cyclopes.
Although the movement of the Cyclopes can be obstructed by Wind magic, it's troublesome if they appear together with other monsters.
Sherry's spear could reach but it acted at the same time as the Scissor Lizard.

Even though I cast Breezestorm, the magic formation doesn't disappear.
It doesn't seem to have 'cancel' function.
The Cyclops spits fire.
Is it a single target magic attack?

Roxanne dodges it without any trouble.
If it's single target magic attack, there's nothing to be worried about as long as it's targeted at Roxanne.
While she was fighting the Scissor Lizard, Roxanne had taken over the position of the central vanguard.

Cyclops seems to be able to target accurately even with its eye closed.
That's actually better.
If it weren't able to aim properly, it would probably use area of effect magic attack just like my Wind spell.
It would be embarrassing if my exploiting its weakness triggered it to use a dangerous attack.

The Cyclopes finally arrive at the front.
But only one of them steps forward.
The one that spat fire seems to be staying in the back.

Because Wind magic delayed the one-eyed giant, is that why it fell back to the second row?
Thankfully, it was not due to using area of effect magic attack.
However, on this floor…
Not all of the monsters use area of effect magic attacks.

The area of effect magic attack was used just once before the Cyclops in the back was taken out.
Because there was just one instance with the two of them, it's not much.
Obstruction in the movement by Wind magic seems pretty effective.

"Did it, desu."

At the same time as Roxanne casting Area of Effect Healing and the Cyclopes collapsing, Miria petrifies the remaining Scissor Lizard.
Both the Scissor Lizards ended up getting neutralized by Miria.

"Ooh, as expected of Miria."
"Yes, desu."

I finish the two petrified monsters off with Durandal.
In the meantime, Roxanne casts Area of Effect Healing again.

I don’t need it for I have HP Absorption of Durandal.

“There’s no problem with MP, is there?”
“No problem at all. The day before yesterday, it felt like I can’t use it too much. Today, however, it seems I can use it over and over again. It’s a mystery. Is it perhaps because I have gotten accustomed to it?”

No, it’s because you were Shrine Maiden Lv1 at that time and Lv25 now.
The number of times it can be used seems to have increased.

If we receive area of effect magic attack, Roxanne can heal us. If the battle is protracted, Miria can inflict petrifaction.
We seem to be able to fight on 24th floor, too.

Notes

1. A Japanese proverb

Chapter 154 - The Right Time

When it was about noon, Roxanne's Shrine Maiden levels up once more and reaches Lv26.
I take out the amber necklaces and the uncut amber gemstones, and head to Palmasque.
I am not sure if she will be able to reach Lv27 by the evening. Even if she does on the last moment, it will not be much use.

So this is the right time, I guess.

"Sherry, please get me four mirrors."
"Okay."

After recovering my MP in Zabir's labyrinth at the border of the Empire, I hand the amber gemstones and the funds for the mirrors to Sherry.

"Also, this may be our last work, so you can say your byes to Palmasque."
"This will be our last work?"
"I don't know the details yet but it will most likely be."
"I understand."

After finishing the preparations in Zabir, I [Warp] us to Palmasque.
It really is as tough as I thought.
However, I had already prepared for it by keeping a recovery pill inside my mouth.
It is an idea the incompetent me came up with.

"Wa- amazing. This town is so white and beautiful, I think."

Vesta is genuinely delighted at seeing Palmasque.
I take the pill immediately in order to recover.
I'm safe, somehow.

I see the four of them off and move to as far as Haruba's labyrinth.
In the labyrinth, I recover MP by myself. There was no issue with this [Warp].

I fight Fly Traps on 18th floor and replenish MP recovery pills.

I want to produce strengthening pills from the item dropped by the boss, Animal Trap, but it will not be possible.
Since it will be 1 vs. 2 in the boss battle on 18th floor.
I think it will be an easy battle for Roxanne, though, even if she's by herself.
I, however, don't have to go to that extent.

Although it's tough, I head back to Palmasque, making full use of the pills.
I consume the recovery pill after arriving at the Adventurer's Guild of Palmasque. Soon after, Roxanne and the girls return.
Everyone holding a mirror each.

I jump from Palmasque to Zabir's labyrinth.
It is difficult for there is no relay point in between.
Actually, Zabir itself is a relay point to Palmasque.

"I informed the owner's wife that I don't know when our next visit will be. The owner's wife doesn't want the amber necklaces to spread. It would probably not be a good thing if everyone had it. I wonder why it will not be a good thing if others have it."
"I see. Thanks."

Sherry explains Palamsque's status to me really well.
As expected of Sherry.
They all are great party members wasted on the useless me.

The value of the amber necklaces would depreciate if everyone had one.
It's already a godsend for the owner's wife to have one.
I don't know as to which route the adventurers of the Harz duchy will be using.

From Zabir, instead of going directly to Quratar's labyrinth, I stop at the towns along the way.
Moving at intervals instead of in one-go, I will be able to save myself from having low MP.
While I recovered my MP using the pills, we return home
Since it is not some suspicious pill, I don't think I will get addicted to

it.

Because there was still some time left, we drop the luggage at home and enter Haruba's labyrinth.
The Duke didn't say anything in regards to the time I was supposed to be there.
I'm just required to be there for the dinner.
Well, there are no clocks here even if he specified time.

I wonder as to when will be a good time to be there.
Because they need to prepare, it will not be a good idea to be there early.
Also, since Bode is in the north of Quratar, the sunset will probably be late.
Should I ask the rational Sherry instead of racking my brains?

"I received dinner invitation from the Duke of Harz. Later, we will head there with the mirrors."

I tell Roxanne and the girls during the exploration.

"With the mirrors? Understood."
"This will be our last time selling the mirrors. It is to celebrate that. Or rather, to apologize."
"Then we will obediently stay outside."

Roxanne seems to have misunderstood what I meant.

"No, all of us were invited."
"Even us? Is that really fine?"
"They insisted on it."

Or rather, the Duke is aiming for Roxanne.

"Isn't the Duke of Harz a noble?"
"He is."
"Even the nobles have slaves employed. She probably believes it is a taboo for them to eat together with slaves."

Sherry explains Roxanne's doubts.
As expected of the rational sherry.
She said the same thing as the Duke.

“When do you think will be a good time to go?”
“In the evening. However, I think it will be better if it’s a little early. Since they are nobles, I don’t think they will be busy.”

Really?
His servants will be the ones doing the preparations, not the Duke himself.
Every argument from Sherry seems to possess a persuasive power.
I was right to consult Sherry.

“Got it. Then let’s go a little early.”
“Is that really fine?”

Roxanne is anxious, just like I am.
For different reasons, though.

“As long as we have fighting spirit, it will be alright. Fighting spirit!”
“Fighting spirit?”
“I will never let go of you, Roxanne.”
“Umm, okay. Thank you very much.”

It is alright.
The Duke will not be able to carry on with this foolishness even if he wants to.
No need to be scared.

After leaving the labyrinth, I first go to the Adventurer’s Guild to sell the items off.
I then return home to make preparations.
I prepare the mirrors and the necklaces.

“I was told that casual clothes will be fine but you may as well put the necklaces on.”
“Is that really fine?”
“Yes, I don’t think there will be any problem.”

I can rest assured now that the rational Sherry says there won’t be any problem.
I take out all the items from my Item Box to finish preparations.
I remove the Earring of Offerings and equip Sacrificial Misanga.
And set Jobless as the first job.

After all, my Explorer is still at Lv48.
Just one more step to Adventurer. Actually, two more steps.
I don't think they will verify our Intelligence Cards but if they did, I would be in trouble.

It will be painful going to the Adventurer's Guild of Bode since I am carrying the mirrors.
It will be painful to walk from the Adventurer's Guild all the way to the castle carrying the mirrors.
But If I were to [Warp] directly to Bode's castle, I wouldn't be able to cheat my way as an Explorer.

And that's when Jobless comes into the fray.
As a Jobless, there will be no problem using [Field Walk] even if I am not an Adventurer.
I should be able to set Adventurer's skill as the skill of Jobless since I am supposed to possess Adventurer.

Even though I'm afraid that Jobless is not widely known, I will be less likely to face any trouble if I am using it.
At least, it is better than an Explorer using [Field Walk].
And as a Jobless, I can come up with a lot of excuses.
There will be no question even if I use magic.

Of course, I don't plan to expose that myself.
It is just an insurance.
It is just an insurance for contingencies.
If there was no need for the insurance, I would be even happier.

After we were done with the preparations, I [Warp] us to Bode's castle.
I put the necklaces on the four of them and have them hold the mirrors.
I'm without my sword.
As for why I'm without my sword, because I am afraid that I would have to remove the sword anyway during the dinner.

What would I do to the sword after removing it?
As an Adventure, I can put it in my Item Box.
But it will be strange for a Jobless, not an Adventurer, to use Item Box.

The empty skill slot of Jobless has not increased from one thus far.

Anyways, it is better not to have a sword right from the start.
If I stepped on the stone bridge, it would crumble.
I have to be attentive and act prudently.
It's risk control.

"I will call the leader immediately. Please wait a minute."

When I arrived at Bode's castle and was about to enter without permission, I was stopped.
Oh
It is different from usual.
Am I being treated differently because it is dinner invitation?

No. I am not alone today, is that perhaps why?
Even though they know me, they can't allow a human of unknown origin, who brought other people with him, to meet the Duke right away.
It's the ABC of risk management.

"Michio-dono, I am glad to see you. Please come this way."

Gozer comes over.
This time, the Duke didn't come out in quick strides, as expected
The crisis control of the knight order seems to be solid.

The duke was inside a big room which we were guided to.
There were other members of the knight order waiting inside.
It is a beautiful, wooden, empty room.

"Michio-dono, it is nice of you to have come."
"I came to join you tonight per your invitation."
"Good, good. There is no need for formal greetings."
"Okay."

The Duke is, after all, a duke.

"And these girls with Michio-dono?"
"Yes, they are my party members: Roxanne, Sherry, Miria, Vesta."

The four of them bow their heads toward the Duke.

“I am the Duke of Harz.”
“Yes, I thank you in anticipation.”

Roxanne greets him as the rest’s representative.

“Hmm, Michio-dono, you brought only four people?”
“They are the only members of my party.”
“You didn’t bring your siblings, parents or other acquaintances?”
“Ah… I see.”

When I answer the Duke’s question, confused, the Duke clarifies.
Was I supposed to bring six people no matter what even if it included other people than my party members?
Since it was a dinner invitation, it would normally be so.
I didn’t understand whether by ‘members’ he meant people whom I fight together with in the labyrinth or other people.

But I don’t have such other people to bring along.
I wouldn’t be able to handle it if I brought some stranger and they behaved badly.

“He really is from a faraway place, huh?”

The Duke mutters to himself.
Why would he think that I came from a faraway place? It must be Luke.
I told Luke that I was from a faraway place to keep him from spying on me.
The Duke seems to have heard from him.

Walls have ears.
Information travels quickly.
This may actually be the reason behind tonight’s invitation.

The Duke was probably trying to sniff a connection with the order of my hometown’s knights.
I knew something was off with this invitation.
However, it’s unlikely for him to have a connection with the order of my hometown’s knights, it being faraway.
He will cut our connection if he finds anything suspicious.

The Duke’s aim was perhaps not Roxanne.

If it’s not this way, then it will be that way.
Either way, I won’t be having a peaceful time, it seems.

“Pass the mirrors to me, please.”

Perhaps having sensed the delicate situation, Gozer steps in.
As expected of the man of the world.
I am glad Gozer is here.
The four girls lean the mirrors against the wall.

“Here are the four pieces.”
“Very well. I will pay a little over the price later. As for the future-”
“As for the mirrors, it will be difficult for me to continue. I think it is about right time. It was a good sideline income. I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity.”

I simply withdraw from peddling the mirrors.
And I don’t think it would have gone well even if I had complained.
If the Duke exercised his authority, I don’t think I would have any chance to resist.
It is not like I absolutely need it.

“However, it will be better if you join the order of knights and assist in the transportation. It will be like killing two birds with one stone.”

Was the Duke aiming for this all along?
If I negotiated to somehow continue, he would ask me to join.
I could continue peddling the mirrors and the Duke could stock up the mirrors using the regular members of the order of knights.
It’s indeed killing two birds with one stone.

“It’s not that good a job, I guess”
“Is it?”

He doesn’t seem to be pursuing it in particular upon my simply withdrawing.
It might not be a bad decision, though, if I joined the Duke’s order of knights.
There would be no need to be worried about missing a meal in the future.
As long as the Duke is alive, at least.

However, there are a number of elves in the order of knights.
I heard that elves don't have a good impression of humans.
I didn't particularly feel that from the Duke and the members of the order of knights but I may experience it if I go down the order.

I would have to interact with a lot of elves if I joined the order of knights.
It would be an unpleasant experience, surely.
I don't have to trouble myself with their relationship with humans.

Also, it would be dangerous to enter the labyrinth.
The risk would increase if I entered per the order of knights' instructions.
I would have the option to consider it, of course, but sometimes, I might have to take unreasonable orders.

I prefer to be free as much as possible.
I should leave as much room to be free as I can.
In addition, I will have to conceal a lot of things during the battles.

"I understand."

Gozer withdraws just as simply.

"And who is the person that Gozer acted as witness for?"
"She is the one if I am not mistaken."

The Duke's eyes was on her after all, huh?
And Gozer didn't forget about Roxanne either.
It has finally come to this.

"She is Roxanne."
"There's no gap in movement. She looks strong, indeed."

The Duke praises Roxanne when I reintroduced her.
Is that really so?
He realized that she is strong from just a glance? Well, she does appear strong.
It's Harlow's Effect.

"Yes. Her stance is brilliant."

Even Gozer has been tricked.
Gozer has watched Roxanne fight, though.
I mean, she is merely standing there, right?

“Perhaps even my attack may not be able to land on her.”
“Her strength can’t be neglected either.”

Is it really like that?
Can they really figure that much out?

“What do you think?”
“Umm, with all due respect, I would like to duel with her at least once.”
“Michio-dono, how about it? This person is one of the talented people in my order of knights. I hope you will allow him to duel with her at least once.”

The Duke was talking to one of the members of the order of knights and he requested a duel with Roxanne.
This man’s job is the same as the Duke’s, Holy Knight.
He is the Holy Knight from Gozer’s party.
Is he one of the most talented members of the order of Harz Knights?

“No, no, it’s a messed up match.”
“They will be using wooden training swords, so there will be no danger.”
“Master, I would like to duel with him, too.”

You, too? Roxanne!
There doesn’t seem to be a way to escape from this duel.

Chapter 155 - Being Drawn out

The mirrors are taken away by a member of the knight order and wooden swords are prepared.
You're going to do it here?
Well, it is quite a large room.

Did the Duke invite us into this room just to make Roxanne play a game?
It's shrewd.
Was this the plan right from the start?

Roxanne also removes her Rapier from her waist and unfastens her necklace, and passes them to Sherry.
She's totally motivated.

"Try not to get hurt."

There's no other choice, so I give my permission.
Since she wants to do it, there's no reason to deny it.

"Yes. Thank you."

Roxanne selects a wooden sword.
It's a one handed sword.
A wooden shield was prepared by the order of knights.

I'm glad they prepared a shield.
I don't need to pull Roxanne's shield from the Item Box.
I'd prefer not to use the Item Box.

Roxanne and the Holy Knight head to the center of the room.
They are facing each other from a small distance.

"Okay."

The Holy Knight yelled and rushed in.
He swings his wooden sword down with both hands.
The Holy Knight seems to be using a two handed sword.
Roxanne parried it away with her sword.

The next blow is knocked away without room to spare.
Roxanne slightly bends her waist and parries it.
The Holy Knight continues on with a wave of angry attacks.

The Holy Knight swings his sword.
From right to left, then left to right, then upper right to lower left.
He slashes from the left to the lower right, then swings it up.
A powerful attack has come out quite early.

Roxanne handles them all with minimal movement.
Dodge, dodge, all missing.
Occasionally she deflects the sword and it will miss her by a millimeter.
Roxanne also swings her sword and the Holy Knight repels it.

The Holy Knight swings his sword up strongly.
It's a swing that could cut through a tree trunk.
Roxanne sees through it and avoids it.
The Holy Knight's sword just cuts the air.

"That will do."

The Duke's voice is heard.
That's it?
I let out a sigh of relief.

I didn't think the match was very long.
It might have felt short because of the tension.
The Holy Knights attack was probably a high level finishing move, so they probably understand Roxanne's ability.
It's good that there weren't any injuries.

"Thank you."
"Thank you."

The two of them lower their swords.
Roxanne comes over here straight away.

"Well done, Roxanne."
"Yes, It finished without me embarrassing Master."

I wouldn't really mind if you lost.

The Duke has his eyes on you.

“She is strong.”
“I just couldn’t touch her.”

The Holy Knight is speaking with the Duke.

“Yes. It was quite perfect. Hard to believe if I didn’t see it for myself.”

Gozer calls out.
Is this because of you?

“You have a good party member, Michio.”
“Yes, she’s someone I am proud of.”
“As expected of someone that can be called a party member of Michio.”

The Duke comes to me.
This is it.

“Your excellency, it’s nearly time.”
“Hmmm. It seems the meal is nearly ready. Come.”

Gozer makes a suggestion. The Duke agrees with it and leaves the room.
He didn’t get a chance to say that he wants Roxanne.
It’s good.
Should I be thanking Gozer?

We follow the Duke as well.
We move down a passage until the Duke opens a door. A wide room like a banquet hall appears.
A huge table is in the center of the room.
There are many dishes lined up on the table.

We enter the room and see Cassia, with a woman waiting on her at either side.
She seems to be more dressed up than the last time we met, probably because we are having dinner now.
She is beautiful.

“I’ve been waiting. I’m glad you came.”

When we enter, Cassia gives a bow.
She is wearing a light blue dress.
It looks good on her.
I think anything would look good if she were the one wearing it, though.

It doesn’t expose much but it’s not a full dress either.
The two women at her sides are wearing similar dresses.
One is wearing navy blue and the other is in dark red.
The two elves are beautiful women but they don’t compare to Cassia.

“These are Michio’s party members: Roxanne, Sherry, Miria and Vesta.”

The Duke says their names.
It’s perfect.
The great Duke.
Did you remember them already from earlier?

Apart from Roxanne, the others names were only said once.
Do you have Analyze?

A person named Kakuei Tanaka remembered all of the DIET members’ faces, names, electoral districts, winning frequencies and their careers as a bureaucrat after joining the ministry.
He could remember their winning frequencies, involvement with retainers, involvement with directors at the bureau and conflicts with rivals after just hearing them once.
Is that what this is?
Remembering peoples names might be a necessary ability of an aristocrat.

The Duke continues and introduces the two people at Cassia’s sides.
I might be imagining it but it feels like they’ve been introduced as the Duke’s wife.
One of the two women seems to be Gozer’s wife.

“I will hold onto your swords.”

A person, who seems to be a servant of the castle, makes a request.
Four people, excluding me, hand over their swords.
Should I have brought one to pass over?
It probably doesn’t matter, does it?

Gozer also hands over his sword.
The Duke goes around to the other side of the table and turns in his sword to one of the guards.

“Michio and everyone, please sit. Let’s start our meal.”

The Duke sits.
His chair is at the left end of the other side of the table.
There are six chairs along the side of a table.
For party members.

Perhaps I should sit opposite the Duke.
I sit face to face with the Duke.
Roxanne is next to me, then Sherry, Miria and finally Vesta.

Cassia sits next to the Duke.
Gozer is next and after that is the woman who I think is Gozer’s wife.
Sherry doesn’t have anything to say.

“Would you like to drink liquor?”

A servant asks.

“Could I possibly have some herbal tea?”
“Of course.”

Drinking is bad.
I might start saying strange things if I get drunk.
The servant asks everyone if they want liquor.
Nobody wants liquor except Sherry.

“Then lets start the feast with Michio and his party members. I’m glad you came. Eat today without holding back and enjoy

yourselves.”

The Duke begins the dinner with a greeting.
The dishes are carried around and the first one seems to be the main meal.
Is the appearance of hot dishes a luxury?

Miria should also be happy because there is a fish dish.
Roxanne and Cassia engage in some passable small talk.
It’s about the amber necklace.
This shows we live well?

“Where are you fighting at the moment?”
“We made it to 24th floor in Haruba’s labyrinth.”
“Oh, that’s quite good.”

It’s necessary to leak some information that is not sensitive.
If it’s about the floor, it can’t be helped.
Roxanne doesn’t speak about anything I’ve said is a secret, though.

I also choose a topic and speak with the Duke.
I need to keep it on safe subjects as much as possible.
I eat the dish while considering it.

“What’s this?”

The dish is like a dissected frog.
It’s just baked.

“It’s thrush, prepared especially for today’s dinner.”
“Such a rare ingredient for hospitality. It’s a cooking ingredient of the highest class.”

The Duke answers and Roxanne adds to it.
It’s not a frog but a bird?
Gozer is eating it by hand, without using a knife.
It’s in one piece so you can just bite into it?

I bite in as well.
It is similar to chicken with fish sauce.
The tender meat comes loose in my mouth.
It tastes quite good.

There's not much meat on it.
It's mostly bones.
That's why it was roasted whole.

I finished eating it quickly.
After that, the meal continued.
I was wary but is this a regular dinner party?
The Duke doesn't seem to be acting any different to normal.

"Michio, can I speak with you for a minute?"

When the number of dishes on the table starts to decrease, the Duke stands up.
He's holding a glass in his hand.
I also stood with the glass of herbal tea I had.
I'm taken to the side.

"What is it?"
"Michio, do you know about the Empire Liberation Society?"
"No."

The Duke mentions something that sounds like a suspicious underground organization.
He lowers his voice.
Is it an organization that is bad to speak about?

"It's a group that helps people who enter the labyrinth. They aim to be liberated from labyrinths and demons."
"I see."

That's why it's a liberation society?
It doesn't seem to be an organization aiming at liberation from the empire.

"It's the main body of the order of knights in the Empire which is under the direct control of the Emperor. I want to invite Michio to the Empire Liberation Society."
"The Empire Liberation Society…"
"You've done service of merit in the labyrinth. There's no doubt about that. I've seen your party members' ability. In Michio's case, I can invite you with confidence."

Is that why you made Roxanne have a match?
You can recommend us without shame if we have Roxanne.
This is surely because of Roxanne.

“Our ability?”
“We can mutually benefit each other while fighting in the labyrinth. People without ability won’t get anywhere.”
“That’s true.”
“You’ll get various kinds of help in the Empire Liberation Society. Locations of labyrinths and approval to access them. Buying and selling equipment within the Empire Liberation Society. Also, information on labyrinths.”

The Duke recommends us.
There are advantages.
Otherwise people wouldn’t join.

The buying and selling of equipment.
There aren’t any Orichalcum swords in the weapons shop.
Checking for empty slots isn’t easy in the auction.

“The buying and selling of equipment?”
“There are some limits to buying and selling but there is no disadvantage to joining. There are some obligatory duties and discrimination against different races is forbidden because we aim to liberate all races but I don’t think that will be a problem in your case. There’s also the obligation to keep secret any information about members in the society.”

There’s a forbidden matter?
I can understand them wanting to keep secrets.

“I see.”
“That’s all of it.”
“Why me then?”

I’m worried there’s still some downsides.
And why is the Duke recommending me?

“With your power, Michio, you’d end up joining sooner or later anyway. It’s natural to recommend you. In your case, you’d defeat a

labyrinth and become a noble sooner or later. I can say this after seeing your party members' ability."
"A noble?"

I wonder if that will happen soon?
I've heard you can become a noble in this world if you defeat a labyrinth.
The Duke has judged that I am strong enough to defeat a labyrinth.
Just by watching Roxanne's match.

No, maybe it's just our potential?
Well, anything is possible.
It wouldn't be bad if we can get a little help.

"It's good that you are on 24th floor. The admission exam for the Empire Liberation Society is given on 23rd floor if there is a recommendation. I heard you were fighting around 10th or 11th floor before."

Was it bad for Roxanne to mention we were on 24th floor?
When I met Gozer I said 10th or 11th.
He seems to have gotten some information from that blunder.

"I'd like to hold off a bit."
"Whatever's convenient. I can get you an application."
"What is the admission exam?"
"Just if you have the ability to pass the boss of 23rd floor. Once that is confirmed, then you should have no problems fighting on 24th floor."

The Duke pushes forward steadily.
Is it alright?
It feels like it might be bad.
Still, there is no reason to decline.

"Well…"
"You can take time to think it over. It will be ten days before I can speak with them even if I apply now. Please come back in ten days, Michio."

In ten days, I can acquire the Adventurer job.

Then there’s no problem, right?
There really is no problem, is there?

Chapter 156 - Shrub

I'm being forced to join the Duke of Harz's suspicious association. Damn!
There's an entry test prior to joining, though, so it has yet to be confirmed.
However, because it was introduced by the Duke, I don't think it's an evil organization.
I don't think he's palming a pot off to me.

"Sherry, do you know about the Empire Liberation Society?"

Having returned home after the dinner, I ask Sherry.

"I have only heard the name. It's an organization which only the most influential amongst those who fight in the labyrinths can join. It's more of a secret society, so there's no information regarding its members. It's to keep the members from being targeted."

Huh?
Which reminds me, the Duke said something regarding confidentiality of the members.
It means I can't leak that the Duke is a member.

Because the Duke is recommending me, he must be a member, surely.
The Duke didn't declare, however, that he's a member.
Do I have to observe the duty of confidentiality? I'm not a member, after all.

But I will become a member, so I decide to remain silent.
Must I not even tell Roxanne and the girls?
It's not confirmed yet.

I want to discuss it with Sherry but I can't.
It's troublesome.
Isn't it a pro technique to keep the victim from calling others for help?

There's an entry test, too. I wonder how it'll go.
Will I be taking it by myself?
The difficulty level will be considerably higher compared to doing it with the party, so I don't think it'll be the case.

Or will I perhaps form party with the examiner?
When the time comes, I'll just perform terribly and fail the test.
However, that the Duke recommended me, won't it be bad?

"I-Is that so? Oh well, it's quite late already. Let's just wipe our bodies and go to sleep."

Because it was unwise to discuss it, I change the topic.
There shouldn't have been a problem in being a bit open about it, though.
And Sherry is under the effect of alcohol, too.

Because the bath isn't heated, it'll be terrible to enter, so I decide to end the day without taking bath.
I produce some hot water.
And wipe the bodies of everyone.

It's my duty to wipe their bodies, of course.
It's my duty to wipe their bodies when we take bath.
I won't abandon my duties no matter what.
After lathering the soap, I get down to it in order, starting with Roxanne

"It was so tiring today. How was your duel? Did it go well?"
"Yes. It wasn't to the extent to be called duel. They were just assessing my strength, so they didn't go all out."

Are you sure?
I do believe Roxanne's words, of course.
Her glossy skin and her supple chest are as splendid as ever. I never get tired of her.

"How was the food?"
"Even though the Duke's wife is the same sex as me, I couldn't help but be in awe at her beauty. The way she used knife was so refined that I could only sigh."

“Really?”
“Furthermore, she enters the labyrinth and fights without flinching. It’s so inspirational.”

So even Roxanne finds Cassia beautiful, huh?
And this fellow seems to have drunk some strong liquor.

“Although it was not a strong liquor, its mild taste was somehow delicious.”

That’s Sherry’s impression.
Because I can’t smell liquor, she doesn’t seem to have consumed a large quantity.
Even so, her complexion has turned slightly pink which looks seductive.
Consequently, I end up fondling hers more than usual.

“As expected of nobles. They drink some fine liquor.”
“It was terrible. Even the knight leader-sama was troubled.”

Which reminds me, Gozer was sitting in front of Sherry.
They might have shared various stories with each other.
I don’t think he was particularly troubled.

“Fish, tasty, desu.”

But I’m sure Sherry was troubled, taking care of this person who has a craze for fish.
I wipe the body of Miria who was bursting with energy just like a fish.
When I wipe her body, she quietens.
It’s all peaceful again.

“How was your day, Vesta?”
“Although I was a little tensed, it was great. I got to visit a beautiful, white town and I also received a gift from Master, so I’m extremely happy.”
“If you enjoyed it, I’m glad.”
“Yes. When I put on that lovely, amber necklace, it felt like I was someone entirely else.”

Nah, I can never mistake Vesta’s chest for someone else’s.

I take my time wiping her meat buns which were not fitting in my palms.

The next morning. We grab the map and enter Quratar's labyinth.
We safely clear 23rd floor.
Because I have been Abnormal Status Resistance Down in the boss battles, Miria is on a petrifaction spree.
This time around, too, it was all thanks to her.

The monster native to Quratar's 24th floor is Tur Turtle.
It's weak against Earth magic. Bad timing.
The monster of 23rd floor, Gummi Slime, is weak against Fire, Water and Wind magic. It's weak against every magic but Earth.
That's what you call 'made for each other'.

The labyrinth will obviously match the monsters with differing weaknesses up.
Because the combination of monsters was not favorable, we cut our time on Quratar's 24th floor short.
Thereafter, until the evening, we explore Haruba's 24th floor.

"Master, there's a message from Mr. Luke. Apparently, he has successfully bid on a Mermaid Monster Card."

When we return home, Roxanne informs.
There seems to be a message from Luke.

He successfully bid on a Mermaid Monster Card once before.
That time, I made Water Resistant Leather Mittens.
Is it not popular?
That's probably it.

"Sherry, Mermaid is water-type, right?"
"That's right."
"Is it okay if I go get it tomorrow?"

I want to take bath today since we didn't yesterday.
It's not because the time has run out. I'll go to the Merchant's Guild tomorrow and get it.

"When you go tomorrow, I think you should place an order for Shrub Monster Card."

“Shrub?”
“Yes. Upon fusion with a weapon, Shrub Monster Card bestows Paralysis skill. I don’t know, though, whether Paralysis skill can stack with Petrifaction skill or not. However, those of dual-sword style use both in the battles. As an Assassin, Miria already has a weapon with Petrifaction skill. If Paralysis skill were attached, too, I’m sure it would be more useful.”

Sherry suggests.
Paralysis skill can be added to Miria’s Estoc, indeed
The probability of inflicting abnormal status will be twice, hopefully.

“Got it. Thanks. I’ll tell him.”

Apparently, she’s no longer concerned about fusing a monster card with Estoc of Petrifaction.
I’m glad.

The next morning. After having breakfast, I head to the Merchant’s Guild.
I call for Luke to buy the Mermaid Monster Card.

“Here’s the Mermaid Monster Card.”

Again, Luke passes me a genuine card.
He doesn’t seem to be scamming me. For now, at least.

“Indeed. Also, I want to use it with Kobold Monster Card. Because I have run out of spares, I’ll have to ask of you to bid on one.”
“Very well. As for its price, it hasn’t changed much.”
“Alright then, you can bid up to 5,000.”
“I’ll comply.”

That I have specified 5,000, I’m pretty sure Luke won’t knock it down below 5,000. Oh well, it can’t be helped.
I want to obtain it ASAP.

“Also, try to bid on Shrub Monster Card. Even if it’s slightly high, I don’t mind. Can you, please?”
“Shrub? Very well.”

I place an order for Shrub Monster Card.

Because Miria now plays an important part in the boss battles, the stronger she gets, the better for us.
Also, the earlier, the better.

After all, the Empire Liberation Society's entry test comprises the boss battle.
And most likely, I will have do it without magic.
If it will be invigilated, I won't be able to use magic.
I will have to do something by then.

If it will be invigilated, Petrifaction and Paralysis skills will get exposed.
But there's no helping it.
I won't be able to partake in the boss battle without using both the magic and the Durandal, so I'll have to expose Durandal at any rate.

They won't be able to help but have their eyes on such a holy sword as Durandal.
However, Durandal is not the only weapon with multiple skills, so it may elude the examiner.
It's absurd to have an Estoc fused with two monster cards but it's not impossible.
Compared to exposing Durandal, exposing an Estoc with two skills is not that big a deal.

Moreover, there are Sacred Spear and Sherry's spear with Incantation Interruption skill.
Thanks to such good equipment, our party is able to fight well.

However, Sacred Spear is a weapon used by Monks, Priests and Shrine Maidens.
It would be weird if I were to use it.
Should I give it to Roxanne or should I give it to Sherry?
To be invigilated is so troublesome.

"Which reminds me, the fusion of Caterpillar Monster Card succeeded last time. Therefore, henceforth, bid on Caterpillar Monster Card only if it's extraordinarily cheap."
"Congratulations. Do you have no intention of selling the equipment fused with monster card?"
"It'll be possible if it's a spare."

“Very well.”

I stop him from bidding on Caterpillar Monster Card any further.
My greed tells me not to stop but it’ll create confusion in the market, so no.

After receiving the Mermaid Monster Card, I return home.
I can’t have it fused just yet.
I have only one Kobold Monster Card left, so there’s no need to rush.

The evening two days later. It turns out that my decision was right.
When we return home, there was a message from Luke.

“Master, there’s a message from Mr. Luke. Apparently, he has successfully bid on a Shrub Monster Card. As for the price, it’s 6,900 Nars.”

Roxanne reads the message.
He was prompt to successfully bid on Shrub Monster Card.
I plan on using Kobold Monster Card together with Shrub Monster Card.
Leaving it aside the other day was the right decision.

“The price is only slightly high, huh?”

It’s not as expensive as it was quick.
It may be a bit expensive but it’s within limit.
However, that it was kept within 6000’s somehow suggests artificiality.
Just like Rokkyuppa ‘super value’.

“Unlike Petrifaction, Paralysis fades over time. Therefore, it seems to proc easily. Because the weapon attached with this skill is easier to use, it’s more popular. That’s probably why it’s more expensive.”

Sherry explains.

“It proc’s easily?”
“The probability will be low in the boss battles, though.”

So it’s no good then?

I want it to help with the boss battles, after all.

“That’ll depend on Miria. I’ll be relying on you, Miria.”
“Okay, desu.”

We will also have Abnormal Status Resistance Down to our rescue in the boss battles.
We will manage it, somehow.

The next morning. I go to receive the Shrub Monster Card.
When I call for Luke, he brings a Kobold Monster Card along with the Shrub Monster Card.
I select 30% Discount in a flurry.

“Fortunately, I was able to successfully bid on a Kobold Monster Card. It’s 5,000 Nars.”

So it’s exact 5,000 Nars, after all.

“Because I’ll be using this Kobold Monster Card, I’ll have to ask of you for one more at 5,000 Nars.”
“Very well.”
“The Shrub Monster Card was a bit expensive this time. Next time, bid on it when the price is considerably low.”

I twist the fact that the Shrub Monster Card was expensive in order to stop him from bidding on it any further.
I can’t just tell him that Sherry has 100% success rate in respect of Monster Card Fusion.
I pay him 1 gold coin and 26 silver coins, and leave the Merchant’s Guild.
30% Discount was effective on the commission for two, hence the total amount.

After I return home, I call Miria and Sherry.
I take out both the monster cards.

“Miria, can you lend me your Estoc of Petrifaction?”
“Yes, desu.”
“Give it to Sherry. Sherry, fuse these cards with the Estoc.”
“O-Okay.”

Sherry replies somewhat nervously.
Even though she was the one to suggest it.

Miria obediently hands the Estoc of Petrifaction to Sherry.
She doesn't seem to care that it may break.
She's perhaps not aware of such a possibility.

Sherry's breathing heavily.
Holding the Estoc and the monster cards, she invokes the skill.
Her hands start glowing.

Estoc of Petrifaction | One-handed Sword
Skills | Annex Petrifaction | Annex Paralysis | Empty | Empty

"Ooh, as expected of Sherry."
"Thank you very much."
"Did it, desu."

There was no reason for it to fail, of course.
It has succeeded.

Chapter 157 - Paralysis

We enter the labyrinth.with the Estoc of Petrification that now also has the skill of Paralysis.
Miria will still be the one using it, and we'll explore the 24th floor of Haruba's labyrinth.
The first group to appear is two Ma Bream, a Cyclops, and a Scissor Lizard.

I use [Breeze Storm] and [Sand Storm] in succession.
Earth magic is good for this combination, but I have Jobless's skill set as beginner level wind magic.
I can't use two [Sand Storm]'s.

Four people run forward to engage the demons before they can use area effect magic.
Three demons line up.
The Cyclops is at the back because the wind magic slowed him down.

The lizard is in the middle.
The Ma Bream are to the right and left of the lizard.
I'd normally like to petrify the lizard.

"Miria, left. Vesta, right."
"Yes."
"I understand."

The central position can be attacked by multiple demons, so Roxanne takes that.
Roxanne will handle an extra demon in the center if there are more than three lined up.
Roxanne's instructions aren't wrong.

Miria is on the left.
Miria might be fine in the center this time, but we don't need to overdo it.
She is on the left because the Cyclops has moved towards the left.

Between the Ma Bream and the Cyclops, it would be good to petrify the Cyclops.

Miria attacks with her Estoc of Petrification.
The Ma Bream in front of Miria doesn't move at all.
One shot?
Is it because of her skill increase?

"It's not white, desu."

So, according to Miria does the demon get whiter when it's petrified?
Then, this demon is not white, it's paralyzed instead of petrified.
I can't notice the colour.

While the Ma Bream wasn't moving, Miria attacked the Scissor Lizard.
It seems a little difficult without moving around to the side.
After the third attack, the Cyclops came.
The lizards movement was not able to be stopped.

Miria returns to her position and takes on the Cyclops.
While I unleash magic, the Cyclops stops moving.

"Miria, is it paralysis?"
"It's not white, desu."

I check with Miria to see if it's paralysis.
Does the paralysis happen often?
Miria moved sideways and attacked the Scissor Lizard.

"It's moving."

Roxanne calls out a warning.
The Ma Bream has begun to move in front of Miria.
Miria dodges the attack and returns one of her own.

"It is white, desu."

The Ma Bream that had begun to move has stopped moving again.
She said it's white this time, so it's petrified.
It seems that both the petrification skill and paralysis skill are

properly working on one sword.

Maybe it's three times more often than petrification.
The paralysis skill seems to be a wonderful one.
Even though I'm not sure the exact percentage of paralysis.

"Miria, lets switch."

At Roxanne's instruction, Miria swaps with Roxanne for the position in front of the Scissor Lizard.
The Ma Bream is petrified to the left of the lizard, and the Cyclops is a stone next to that. Miria might get attacked from both sides.
Roxanne moves while attacking the Scissor Lizard, just as the Cyclops begins to move.

Roxanne thrusts her rapier at the Cyclops.
Roxanne avoids the Cyclops attack with no problems.
Miria attacks the Scissor Lizard with the Estoc of Petrification while avoiding it's attacks.

The Scissor Lizards movement stopped.
If Miria doesn't say anything, is it paralysis?
Miria moves to the side and attacks the Cyclops.

As I thought about it, the Scissor Lizard began to move at once.
What happened?
Paralysis seems to happen easily, but getting out of it easily is a problem.

The petrified Ma Bream became smoke because of my magic.
The blockage between the Scissor Lizard and the Cyclops is gone, and Miria is in the center.
The Ma Bream that Vesta is handling soon becomes smoke as well.
There's just two demons left.

"I did it, desu!"
"Is it petrified?"
"Yes, desu."

The Scissor Lizard seems to have been petrified.
Only one remains.

I switched to [Breeze Ball] and attacked the Cyclops.
The Cyclops stops moving again because of Miria, and falls before it begins moving again.
After the Cyclops, I pull out Durandal to finish off the lizard.

“Paralysis seems to happen often, but is a bit troublesome.”
“We can handle it.”
“Well, it did stop the demon moving quite a few times.”

It’s probably alright for Roxanne, and it doesn’t matter for Sherry at the back.

“It’s fine, desu.”
“I don’t think it’s a problem.”

Miria and Vesta don’t mind, so it should be fine.

“Miria, you can tell the difference between a petrified monster and a paralyzed one?”
“I can, desu.”
“You don’t need to let us know if it’s paralyzed, only let us know if it’s petrified.”
“I’ll do it, desu.”

When a demon stops moving, I can’t tell the difference between it being petrified or paralyzed, so I gave out instructions.
It’s a surprising blind spot.
It would be bad if it began to move when I thought it was petrified, and I don’t want to waste magic because I think it’s paralyzed.

The next group has two Cyclops, and two Scissor Lizards.
Four people start running as I use my wind magic.
I use double wind magic because there are two of each.
After using [Wind Storm], I run in.

Sparks are dancing as the four people arrive at the demons.
It’s the area effect magic of the demons.
Since there are four demons that can use area effect magic, it can’t be helped.
We’ll try and stop them getting a second shot.

Roxanne stops and uses [Area healing].

Once might not be enough so I use it as well.

A party normally can't use the same skill at the same time because of incantation resonance.
That doesn't apply to me though since I have [Incantation Omission].
I tried it earlier, and it works fine.

Miria and Vesta take one Scissor Lizard.
Sherry arrived before they got a chance for a second shot.
Sherry uses her spear from the back.

When one of the lizards tries to use area magic again, it's movement is stopped.
Miria didn't say anything so it must be paralysis.
Roxanne catches up and takes on the other lizard.
Sherry and Vesta attack the hardened Scissor Lizard.

The other lizard swings it's scissors.
Roxanne avoids it easily.
Miria uses the chance to strike with the Estoc of Petrification.

Oh, it's movement stopped.
Both the Scissor Lizards aren't moving.

"I'll go forward. Come with me if you can Sherry."

Roxanne casually slips between the two who had stopped moving.
Aren't you worried they might recover from paralysis.
Vesta keeps slashing away with two swords, doing as she pleases.

"Okay."

Sherry checks to make sure the lizards aren't moving, and then carefully moves along the side.
Miria and Vesta are attacking the two Scissor Lizards that aren't moving.

I use the Sacred Spear to attack during the intervals of my wind magic shots.
I'll be able to notice the moment they begin to move from here.
I can attack without having to worry about a counter attack.

Roxanne arrives at the Cyclops.
The Cyclops are hindered by the wind magic, so they hadn't advanced much.
Sherry reached them a little later.
The two of them line up in front of the Cyclops.

There's no longer a worry about area effect magic.
There's still the possibility the Scissor Lizards might recover and try to use it though.
Sherry is at the Cyclops now, but Roxanne's judgement is correct.
The demons who can't move can't conjure.

The lizard that Vesta is attacking starts moving again, but Miria slashes at it and it stops moving again.
The paralysis is quick.

The paralysis skill really seems to happen a lot.
Of course that's because Miria is an assassin.
It's a considerably useful skill.

"I did it, desu."

Petrification finally happens.
I don't think that the speed of petrification has changed since the paralysis skill was added to the Estoc of Petrification.
It can happen around twice during a fight with a group.

Paralysis is happening at minimum two times more often.
I think the chance is at least double that of petrification.

"Vesta, come forward."
"I understand."

Since one has been petrified, Vesta has been called away.
Miria attacks the paralyzed lizard.
There's not much distance to the Cyclops, but it's better to petrify the Scissor Lizard because I am using wind magic.

Vesta ran forward.
As she charges in, she swings her two swords from the right and left at the Cyclops as it flinches from the wind magic.
Sherry steps back a step to keep watch of the two Cyclops with her

spear.
It's safer like this.

I keep the wind magic going as I attack the Scissor Lizard with the Sacred Spear.
Paralysis happens often, and petrification happens moderately often.
The two Cyclops were defeated before the second Scissor Lizard was petrified.

"I did it, desu."

When the Cyclops were defeated, the three people there started running over but the Scissor Lizard was petrified before they arrived.
Two petrified Scissor Lizards are lined up.
It's turned out there was no need for the three of them to run back, but it's safer this way.
Vesta returns to the Cyclops and then comes back with copper she picked up.

I take out the two petrified demons with Durandal.
The lizards became smoke one after the other.
If they are petrified then there is no risk, and I can absorb some MP.

With paralysis on the Estoc of Petrification the battles have become easier.
Even though both skills are on a single weapon they seem to be working properly.
The paralysis is a bonus.

The frequency of the petrification has not changed.
Even if the chance of petrification has fallen because of the paralysis skill, it isn't enough to notice.
There is no difference I can see.
It also seems like a paralyzed demon can be petrified.

Paralysis can be removed naturally, and the vanguard has to move a lot.
I hope you don't mind that much.

When the smoke from the Scissor Lizard dissipated, there was a card remaining.

A monster card.

“Oh. A card.”
“The lizards monster card from the Scissor Lizard. It has the skill for fire resistance if you add it to a piece of equipment.”
“Like the mermaid monster card I have?”
“Yes. The same sort of thing.”

Like Sherry said, I can tell it’s the lizards monster card even without [Analyze].
The mermaids monster card puts the water attribute on equipment.
The butterfly monster card puts the wind attribute on equipment.
The fire attribute version comes from the lizard monster card.

I have one kobold monster card.
I also have a mermaid and a lizard monster card.
Should I fuse the lizard monster card?

At the moment we have to deal with the Cyclops and Scissor Lizard, both of which use fire attribute area effect magic.
I can decrease the damage.
But, even if fire attribute magic is used, we can fight fine on Haruba’s 24th floor.
Should I prepare for future problems?

Tur Turtle on Quratar’s 24th floor user water attribute area effect magic.
I was thinking of fusing the mermaids monster card when I tried Quratar’s 24th floor.

“Roxanne, which do you think I should use?”
“Well, I think it would be best to use the resistance to fire attribute for now.”

The mermaids monster card or the lizards monster card.
No matter which I fuse to the Wind Resistant Damascus Steel Forehead Protector it will only be Roxanne that benefits from it.
Even though Roxanne said to use the protection from the area effect magic of the Cyclops and the Scissor Lizard, maybe the water attribute would be better.

Maybe the Tur Turtle won't be too much trouble either?
Hmmm.

"We might be able to get another kobold monster card before we pass the 24th floor."

As Sherry says, there's that possibility as well.
It might be best to fuse it with the lizard monster card.

Chapter 158 - Intermediate Job

Thereafter, the battles continue.
As speculated, paralysis proc's approximately twice as much as petrifaction.
This skill seems to be easy-to-use even for someone who's not an Assassin.

I want it attached to Roxanne's and Vesta's weapons, too.
Was it a bad decision to have withdrawn from bidding on Shrub Monster Cards?
Oh well, it can't be helped now.
It would seem suspicious if I asked of him again.

After the dinner, I have Sherry fuse the Lizard Monster Card.
She still seems to be a bit tensed but it succeeds without any issue.
As expected, the name of the Damascus Steel Forehead Protector is still the same.
The name of an equipment is decided based on the first skill attached.

The Damascus Steel Forehead Protector has now both the Wind Resistance and the Fire Resistance skills attached.
And I have yet to use the Mermaid Monster Card.
Just a bit more and it'll have the resistance to all four attributes.

"Roxanne, what's the status of the forehead protector?"
"Yes, the damage has decreased, indeed. As to how much, I can't say."

The next day. After Roxanne receives an area of effect magic attack, I enquire the status from Roxanne.
Since the resistance to fire has now increased, the damage seems to have decreased.
However, that's only in Roxanne's case.

Now that I can recover MP from petrified monsters, I rarely move to the front with Durandal.

Originally, I had a Hard Leather Hat equipped because I used to exchange it with Miria's Poison Resistant Hard Leather Hat or Vesta's Strengthened Hard Leather Hat when moving to the front.
Now that I don't move to the front, I can equip the Wind Resistant Damascus Steel Forehead Protector myself.

From safety viewpoint, it would perhaps be better for me. Roxanne, too, would probably say the same thing but I decide to keep quiet.
It's not nice to hog all the good equipment to myself.

Without exchanging our equipment, we continue with the exploration.
There's no need anyway for we can safely fight on Haruba's 24th floor.
Also, now that we have the Paralysis skill, it has become even easier.
The next day. My Explorer job finally reaches Lv50.
When I open Job Settings interface, the Adventurer job was there.

Adventurer Lv1
Effects | Medium Increase in Endurance | Small Increase in Spirit | Minute Increase in Dexterity
Skills | Item Box Operation | Party Formation | Field Walk

Finally, an advanced job, huh?
It took long.
Actually, my long doesn't necessarily mean long nor my short necessarily means short.
The people in this world become Adventurers after a long struggle, so I shouldn't complain.

As for the verification of Intelligence Card, there's no longer any fear.
I can now live in this world with my head held high.
Even if it's the entry test, I can push through it like a don.

The requirement of Adventurer seems to be Explorer Lv50, indeed.
Even if the requirement is something else, it seems to have already been met.
Like moving via Field Walk of another Adventurer?

The job effects of Adventurer are pretty good.
But the skills are bland.

They’re not any different from Explorer’s.

Explorer Lv50
Effect | Small Increase in Endurance
Skills | Item Box Operation | Party Formation | Dungeon Walk

This is what Explorer looks like.
Even though it’s Lv50 now, the effect and the skills haven’t increased.
However, the effects of Adventurer are vastly superior.
If every party member had an advanced job, it would be totally awesome.

I add Sixth Job and select Adventurer.
Originally, I didn’t plan on using it except for during Intelligence Card verification. However, now that I have seen the job effects, I decide to level it up.
Because First Job is connected to the bonus points, I can’t replace Explorer Lv50 with Adventurer Lv1.
Since I can’t dispense with Jobless, Hero, Wizard and Priest, I had to add another job in order to select Adventurer.

To be honest, I would like to remove Explorer as First Job.
Even if Explorer is not First Job, I can keep items in its Item Box and when there’s verification of Intelligence Card, I can freely select Adventurer as First Job.
But Hero and Jobless are not as high leveled as Explorer.
And unlike Jobless, I won’t be able to rest easy with Hero as First Job.

There wouldn’t be much difference if I replaced Explorer with Wizard. If Wizard were First Job, it would be troublesome to use the magic skill of Jobless.
If there are multiple jobs with magic skills, that of the lower numbered job invokes first.
Setting Jobless, which can have no more than one skill, before Wizard, which has four attributes magic, will be more effective.

In summary, there’s no problem in selecting Explorer as First Job and adding another job to select Adventurer.
There’s no pressing need to remove Explorer as First Job.

In order to add another job, I have to abandon Required Experience 1/20th but it can't be helped.

Kaga Michio | Male | 17 Years Old
Explorer Lv50 | Hero Lv46 | Jobless Lv41 | Wizard Lv49 | Priest Lv39 | Adventurer Lv1
Equipment | Sacred Spear | Hard Leather Hat | Alba | Dragon Leather Gloves | Dragon Leather Shoes | Earring of Offerings

As for the Item Box of Adventurer, I've heard that its size is 50 types of items x 50 units.
It's probably fixed, regardless of the level.
The Item Box of fixed size, it's same in case of Cook.
And in case of Sherry's Master Smith.

As for Field Walk, since it can't be used inside the labyrinth, I can't ascertain it now.
More than failure, I'm afraid of Sherry's eyes.
But I better try it soon.

While I was exploring Adventurer, we arrive at the boss room of 24th floor.
Finally, huh?
It took quite some time.
After all, it seems to have expanded more than 23rd floor.

"In this boss battle, there will be a slight change in the tactics. I'll still be using magic; there's no change in that respect. However, we won't be waiting to separate the monsters. We will actively attack from the outset. Roxanne will take on the boss. Miria and Vesta will take on the two accompanying monsters. Sherry will keep an eye on the boss from the centre."

I issue the instructions in the waiting room.
If we waited, we would come under area of effect magic attack.
I mean, we already have once before.

I remove Adventurer and select Gambler.
In the boss battles, we rely on Miria's abnormal status inflicting sword.
Now that the Paralysis skill has been added, too, it'll be even better

to leave it to her.
Whether or not the number of area of effect magic attacks Miria's opponent uses is less than the number of area of effect magic attacks we would receive if we waited is yet to be seen.

"Understood."
"The Cyclops boss is called Silver Cyclops. Its resistances are same as Cyclops."
"Do, desu."
"I think it'll be alright."

I hand Durandal to Vesta and rush into the boss room.
Three monsters take form.
Three giants, huh?
There are two Cyclopes and in between them is a Silver Cyclops.

The Silver Cyclops is bigger than the Cyclopes but not by much.
It's color isn't red; it's grey.
Or is it silver? It's name is silver, after all.

After casting one Wind spell, I use Abnormal Status Resistance Down on the Cyclops which Miria was confronting.
When I cast the Wind spell, the Cyclopes close their eyes.
The Silver Cyclops, however, is unaffected.
The resistance of the boss seems to be higher.

The Silver Cyclops advances two to three steps and swings its fists down.
Roxanne dodges with ease and thrusts her Rapier out.
The boss counters with a backhanded blow which barely misses her head.
It loses its balance.

When the Cyclopes falter after the second Wind spell, Sherry and I use the gap and move behind the boss.
While Roxanne was playing with the boss, I harass it by poking my spear.
I'm keeping some distance for I'm afraid that I may get attacked.
While casting Wind spells, I poke my spear from the safe zone.

"Did it, desu."

One of the Cyclopes has been petrified already.
That it was petrified, not paralyzed, does the probability of paralysis decrease considerably in the boss battles?
It's the Cyclops that was petrified, though, not the boss.
So, was it random then?

I cast Abnormal Status Resistance Down on the Silver Cyclops, too.
Miria attacks from the side.

"Sherry, do you want to change position?"
"I guess."

When I call out to Sherry, she changes position.
Sherry was diagonally behind the boss, next to the petrified Cyclops.
This deployment was in order to tackle area of effect magic attacks of the Cyclopes.
Because the petrified monster can't use area of effect magic attack, it's better to move next to the Cyclops which Vesta is keeping company.

Since Vesta has Durandal, she can cancel the attack herself.
Besides, Sherry's spear may not reach in time for there's some distance between the Cyclops and the boss.
Still, it's better to be next to it.
In case of a contingency, we will have a back up.

Ah, it has been paralyzed.
When I move diagonally behind the boss from behind Sherry while casting a Wind spell, the Silver Cyclops gets paralyzed.
Because it's paralysis, Miria continues to attack it without saying anything.
So paralysis proc's in case of the boss, too, huh?

Sherry moves and thrusts her spear into the Cyclops.
Roxanne and Miria are still attacking the boss.
You might think as to why Miria is not moving to the other side. However, because the boss is still under the effect of Abnormal Status Resistance Down, it's the right decision to continue as is.

"Did it, desu."

Before the Silver Cyclops becomes able to move again, it gets petrified.
Roxanne and Miria join in the attack on the remaining Cyclops.
I switch to Breezeball and join in the attack, too.
This one shouldn't require me to cast Abnormal Status Resistance Down.

With one more monster, Miria can completely shut the battle out but there's no need to go to that extent.
In the end, without getting petrified or paralyzed, the Cyclops dies to Vesta's Durandal.
Is the effect of Abnormal Status Resistance Down really that big?

After Vesta hands Durandal over to me, I tidy up the remaining two.
I finish the boss off.
After a series of strikes, the boss turns into smoke.

When the smoke dissipates, there was a small item left.
I thought it was a monster card but it's a silver coin.
Was it there from the beginning?
Is it perhaps a lost article of the previous party?

"Silver coin?"
"Yes, I have heard that Silver Cyclops drops silver coin."

Sherry explains.
Because it drops silver coin, is that why it's called Silver Cyclops?
It must have silver somewhere on its body.

A monster shouldn't be carrying money.
Is it just the people who call the silver dropped by Silver Cyclops silver coin?
No, Appraisal is showing it as silver coin, too.

If a monster were to drop silver coin, it would be farmed by those who are strong.
Wouldn't it cause inflation?
Or because it's the boss, it can't be farmed?

Does it perhaps perish after some time?
If I didn't put it in the Item Box and it perished, I would be

heartbroken.
Just like proton decay.
It must have something like half life.

Because silver coin is a dropped item, is that why it can be put in the Item Box?
If it's kept in the Item Box, it shouldn't perish.

Thereafter, I take out the petrified Cyclops. With that, the boss battle concludes.
This time, the boss was paralyzed throughout. With the addition of the Paralysis skill, it has now become easier.
Miria is flourishing in the boss battles.

"This time, Miria petrified two which made it easier. I'll be relying on you from now on."
"Okay, desu."

Although I want to stroke her cat ears, I can't in the labyrinth due to her protective gear.
After leaving the boss room, we move to 25th floor.

"Sherry, which monster appears on Haruba's 25th floor?"
"Gummi Slime."
"Gummi Slime, huh? It's weak against Wind magic, too, right?"
"Yes."

Gummi Slime is weak against many attributes of magic, including Wind, which is the weakness of Cyclops, too.
There's no need to change the skill of Jobless.
25th floor can be explored as is.
We advance while taking the monsters out.

Although the duration of battles has increased on 25th floor, it doesn't mean we can't fight.
Even if the battles are protracted, Miria's abnormal status inflicting sword makes it easy.
As for paralysis, its duration doesn't increase proportionally with the duration of battles.
We can manage 25th floor, somehow.

However, I’m not sure if we should advance to any higher floor than this.
Before that, we need to strengthen.
Should I have abnormal status inflicting skills attached to all of our weapons?

While I was thinking over various possibilities, my Wizard job reaches Lv50.
I have acquired Grand Wizard.
It’s the same job as Gozer’s.

Grand Wizard Lv1
Effects | Medium Increase in Intelligence | Small Increase in MP | Minute Increase in Spirit | Minute Increase in Endurance
Skills | Intermediate Fire Magic | Intermediate Water Magic | Intermediate Wind Magic | Intermediate Earth Magic | Basic Ice Magic | Basic Lightning Magic

The job effects clearly tell that it’s a job of higher tier.
Moreover, magic skills have been upgraded to intermediate.
The tier of Grand Wizard is higher than Wizard’s but it’s actually an intermediate job.

Chapter 159 - Non-homo

I have acquired Grand Wizard.
However, the name of the skills are, again, something like Intermediate Fire Magic, Intermediate Water Magic, etc. It still doesn't show the name of the actual magic.
So cruel!

"Do you know about the magic which Grand Wizards use?"

I ask Sherry since I'm stumped.
After having left the Adventurer's Guild, I ask her while shopping.

"Umm, yes. If I'm not mistaken, six types of magic are: Burn, Aqua, Wind, Dirt, Ice and Thunder."

She knows, huh?
As expected of thunder- I mean, Sherry.

"Thanks. Is there a job that's higher tiered than Grand Wizard?"
"In theory, there is but up till now, it is merely a legend."
"And what types of magic does that job allows one to use?"
"Even I wouldn't know that."

Since she went as far as to call it a 'legend', I expected as much.
Because Grand Wizard's skills are 'intermediate', I am pretty sure there must be another job with 'advanced' magic.
Will it be the advanced job, then?
Until I'm able to use the magic, I won't be able to understand.

Even if I acquire the advanced job, I will have a hard time figuring out the magic spells.
As for the Wind magic, the first was Breeze. After that is Wind. The next one will probably be Tornado then?
I can't make out the others.
When the time comes, I'll have no choice but to experiment.

"For Ice and Lightning magic, it will most likely be Ice and Thunder."
"Correct. Both of them are special magic. The Ice magic seems to

be effective against monsters that are weak to Water attribute and/or Earth attribute. In other words, unless you have resistance to both the Water and the Earth attributes, you won't be able to reduce the damage."

The Ice magic seems to combine both the Water and the Earth attributes of magic.
Is being solid the characteristic of Earth magic?
Since the monsters match their strengths and weaknesses to form groups, it will prove to be quite useful.
Even if they are not weak against any attribute, it won't be possible for them to have resistances to both the attributes.

"I see."
"As for the Lighting magic, while it is not a weakness of any of the monsters, it is a special attribute that none of them is resistant to. In addition, there is a chance of getting inflicted with paralysis if hit by the Lightning magic. It is this characteristic that makes it an excellent magic."

The Lighting magic is perhaps the most suitable magic for me.
The reason being, I have Jobless and I can use multiple jobs.
If I set Lighting magic as the skill of Jobless, I'll be able to cast two spells at the same time.
Won't that make my chance of paralyzing the enemies double?

If that didn't work, casting the spells alternately would do, too.
Moreover, I may be able to complement it with the [Abnormal Status Probability Up] skill of Assassin.
I look forward to it tomorrow.

The problem, however, is the jobs which I should be using.
Because Adventure is currently at low level, I can't afford to set another job.
It will be difficult to set Gambler and Assassin.

I can also cast three consecutive magic spells with Jobless, Wizard and Grand Wizard.
Fantastic.
It is quite attractive.
Whether I should give up Adventure or Explorer or Priest or Hero, I

have to think it through.

Wizard can't use Lightning magic.
If I set Lightning magic as the skill of Jobless, even setting Wizard as First Job will no longer be a problem.
Should I give up Explorer then?

Both Explorer and Wizard are Lv50 now.
Since it was difficult to increase the level beyond Lv30 and Lv40, it would be even more so beyond Lv50.
The difference between levels of Explorer and Wizard shouldn't be that wide.
Even if Explorer reached Lv51 earlier, a difference of one bonus point would not be fatal.

However, won't it be problematic during the verification of Intelligence Card?
If I remove Explorer, I will have to put the items in the Item Box of Adventurer.
In that case, I won't be able to set Adventurer as First Job during the verification.

Because Explorer can easily be set as First Job, there's no need to remove it now.
If it wasn't for Adventurer, I wouldn't feel the difference whether it was Explorer or Wizard.
I wonder when will the time come when I can stick my chest with pride as an Adventurer during the verification.

"Is it used the same way — Ball, Storm and Wall — as before?"
"I have heard there are three types of spells, certainly."

There is no variation in this regard, huh?
After shopping, I [Warp] back home from the Adventurer's Guild.

Because the walls of Quratar's house are made from protective cement, [Field Walk] won't be usable.
Without [Warp」, I won't be able to move directly to and from the labyrinth.
As for the difference between [Warp] and [Field Walk], I haven't compared the two yet.

Now that I have acquired Grand Wizard, should I try various things out then?

First, I went to the bathroom in order to prepare the bath.
As I'm always alone in the bathroom, I can undertake whatever experiment I like in here.
I cast [Aqua Wall].

A wall of water emerges.
It's one size bigger than [Water Wall」.
Not just bigger, thicker as well.
If it can produce this much quantity, it's great, isn't it?

The consumption of MP, however, is a bit higher, or so I feel.
Because I can only rely on my feeling, I can't be accurate about it.
But if I feel it's higher, it should be higher.

When the spell breaks, the water falls into the bathtub.
Since the water directly fell in the bath, I couldn't accurately measure the difference in quantity.
I can measure it using the buckets but I'm not sure if I need to go to that extent.

After setting Intermediate Water Magic as the skill of Jobless, I cast [Burn Wall] and [Aqua Wall] simultaneously.
The water is boiling inside the wall of hellfire.
The Burn Wall, too, seems to be one size bigger than Fire Wall.
The method of use did not change between intermediate and basic level of magic.

I try [Ice Wall] next.
I was able to create a wall above the the Bathtub.
The Ice magic seems to be used in the same manner.

Over time, the wall of ice drops as is.
After initially falling vertically in the bathtub, it collapses sideways.
After hitting the edge of the bathtub, it slides back into the boiling water and floats up the surface.

Even though it's the hot water I painstakingly boiled using [Burn Wall] just now.

Oh well. Since it is a test, there is no helping it.

The ice, which was still intact and floating on the surface of the water in the bathtub, is melting little by little.
The Ice magic seems to produce frozen water.
Since the water produced by [Water Wall」 is safe to drink, It should be the same in case of [Ice Wall」.

I bring Durandal out and crush the Ice.
I'm using a holy sword as a replacement for an ice pick.
Here, however, it is better to use Durandal than doing it with bare hands.
Think hygienically.

I try to taste a piece.
It's chilled.
It's ice.
It feels good.

Although it's not hot in the bathtub yet, ice will be refreshing in the summer.
It will be amazing.
I have got a great magic.

"Labyrinth?"

When I was going to the kitchen holding Durandal, I run into Roxanne.
It's my routine, going to the labyrinth in order to replenish my MP while heating the bath.

"Nope, I wanted to share crushed ice with you. Everyone, come to the bathroom."
"Crushed ice?"

Disregarding the puzzled look on everyone's faces, I take out a small bucket as a substitute for a cup.
If I don't hurry, it will melt.
Well, even if it melts, I'll simply have to produce it again.

When I come back with the cup, only a little thin ice was left.
Because it has now become thin, it shatters once I poke it with

Durandal.
I scoop the ice with the cup.

“This is crushed ice. Try putting it on your hand.”

I have everyone present try it.
I put the ice pieces on their palms.

“It’s cold.”
“Is this by any chance ice?”
“xxxxxxxxxx”
“I think it’s certainly ice.”

It’s really popular since it’s summer, after all.
And she doesn’t seem to be weak against ice.
I have no idea what Miria said, though.
I take the initiative of eating it and then instruct them to try eating it, too.

“The ice is floating on the water. So, it really was true.”

Sherry is looking at the bathtub.
Which reminds me, I taught her this before.
So she didn’t believe me back then, huh?

“It was like I said.”
“Is this Ice magic?”
“Yup.”
“Were you perhaps able to acquire Grand Wizard?”

Sherry is unnecessarily sharp.
Although you didn’t believe me back then.
The Ice is clearly floating on the water.

“I just happened to acquire it.”
“As expected of Master.”
“But- in order to acquire a superior Job like Grand Wizard, you require tens of years of hard and dedicated training. Without using Dope medicine, it’s impossible.”
“It’s to be expected because it’s Master.”

Did Sherry believe it couldn’t be achieved without tens of years of

training before witnessing me?
Even though I didn't do any such training.
I wish you learn from Roxanne's obedience.

Also, I don't think using the Dope medicine will turn out good.
Because the Dope medicine does not necessarily strengthen you, the increment in your stats will be small, if any at all, should you level up using the Dope medicine.
If there is a stats requirement to acquire Grand Wizard, you will not be able to acquire it using the Dope Medicine.
Furthermore, you will end up in a miserable state after consuming a large quantity of it.

"Amazing, desu."
"I think it is amazing."

Miria and Vesta praise me.
I stroke Miria's cat ears over and over again.
Later, I will make some ice cream for you.

I have the four of them leave the bathroom and get back to preparing the bath.
I try to cast [Thunder Wall] as an experiment.
There is no point in doing it inside the bathroom but it can't be helped.

A white, flashing wall emerges.
Is this Lightning magic?

I undertake [Field Walk] experiment, too, inside the bathroom.
The black wall doesn't appear after I invoke [Field Walk].
Apparently, it doesn't even invoke under the effect of protective cement.

Midway through, I enter the labyrinth with Roxanne.
Even with the intermediate magic, recovery of MP is necessary.
The efficiency of MP consumption doesn't seem to have improved.

Grand Wizard is only Lv1, though.
It will become easier once it levels up.
Its effects are splendid, after all.

“Roxanne, I would like to take some time with the experiments.”
“Okay.”

After informing Roxanne in advance, I try to invoke [Field Walk] inside the labyrinth.
The black wall doesn’t appear.
[Field Walk] doesn’t seem to even invoke inside the labyrinth.

It was the same when I tested it inside the bathroom under the effect of protective cement.
Does the labyrinth has same effect as the protective cement?
Nope. Since [Dungeon Walk] can be used, there’s no such relationship, is there?

Anyways, since the black wall didn’t appear, I don’t need to tell her about the experiment.
I am glad it wasn’t in front of Sherry.
Although it took some time, Roxanne did not even realize the experiment was already underway.

Without saying anything, I [Warp] at once to Quratar Adventurer’s Guild.
From there, I move to the forest in the outskirts of Vale via [Field Walk].
It’s nostalgic.

Here, we are out of everyone’s sight.
I imagine the house wall and invoke [Field Walk].
A black wall appears.
However, I’m not able to go inside.

Will it likewise fail if I use [Field Walk] from a place, where it is usable, to another place where it is not?
I return home using [Warp] this time.
The way of using [Field Walk] is similar to [Warp].
As for the consumption of MP, there may be a difference but I didn’t notice it.

“Un, I see.”
“Did it turn out the way you wanted it to? As expected of Master.”

It wasn't anything great, though.
We separate and I carry on preparing the bath.
After preparing the bath, I try to make ice cream.

It failed.
I failed to make ice cream.
Although I was trying to make ice cream, I ended up making a sort of sherbet.
I wasn't able to make ice cream.

Is it impossible to make ice cream?
Well, I have never made ice cream before.
I don't know the detailed procedure of making ice cream.
I added some salt to the ice in order to maintain the temperature and kept stirring it *guruguru* until it was cold enough. I don't think I made any mistake up to this point.

I added less sugar than required, it seems. It was probably insufficient.
It looks like I need to add more.

"It's chilly and delicious."
"This sensation, I never experienced it before."
"Amazing, desu."
"Wa, it's cold."

Even though it's a failure, it's still popular with the four of them.
If I stop thinking about ice cream for a minute, it won't be that bad, huh?
But I wouldn't have needed to trouble myself with stirring for a mere sherbet.

Since it's called ice cream, maybe I need to add cream as well before cooling it, not just milk and sugar.
Fresh cream does exist in this world.
Rather, if I leave the milk as is overnight, I can obtain fresh cream by skimming the milk skin.

The milk in this world is a little weird, though.
As you would expect from another world.
It is different from the milk in Japan.

I thought it was rotten when I saw it for the first time.

Besides, I didn’t get the quantity of milk skin I needed for the fresh cream.
Just a little float.
I tried it once before because I wanted to put cream in the crepe. However, when I didn’t get the quantity I wanted, I gave up.

I can try again for the sake of ice cream, though.
This time, I will buy a large quantity of milk.

Chapter 160 - Soft-shelled Turtle

When I went to bed that night, I placed ice into the tub near the side of the bed. It didn't provide as much cooling as expected. To the degree where you wouldn't even know whether it cooled at all. This didn't go so well.

Vesta's skin was much cooler than that of a human's. It was so refreshing that I ended up moving close to her. It seems cooling with ice is quite difficult.

The wind that passes over the tub is still cold. The idea itself is not wrong. Do I get someone to fan it overnight? I really can't say I should.

If it was some rich person in this world, they would likely have someone to do it. If that was their only job they'd work at night and be able to sleep during the day so it should be fine. Do I buy a dedicated maid as well? If I bought one in the summer and got rid of them in the autumn it'd be too cruel.

Or do I make enough ice to fill up the bedroom? The ice would melt of course. Dealing with the aftermath might be more troublesome.

Ice magic isn't a magic that cools things. It only creates ice. There seems to be a barrier that prevents the effects of heat.

Waking up only slightly cooler than yesterday, we entered the labyrinth. Making Wizard the first job, I remove Explorer and add Grand Wizard. When I made ice last night, I had the skill of Jobless set to Basic Ice Magic. Ice magic will be effective on 24th floor of Quratar.

Gummi Slime is weak against the Water attribute and Tur Turtle's weakness is the Earth attribute. Because Tur Turtle has resistance to the Water attribute, it's unknown how Ice magic will affect them. Will the resistances and weaknesses offset each other? Because it is not resistant to both the Water and the Earth, the resistance should not be completely effective.

If Ice magic is useless, then I will try Lightning magic next. Since Ice magic was set as the skill of Jobless last night, I can freely set a new skill now. The Wind attribute becomes effective if we head to the 25th floor of Haruba with Gummi Slime and Cyclops appearing there. It is possible to set it to Intermediate Wind Magic if the skill remains unchanged at that time.

I handed the map to Roxanne and proceeded to the 24th floor of Quratar and came across Tur Turtle and Gummi Slime groups. Perfect. I cast Ice Storm two times.

The Wizard job is also active, but I left it at two shots of Ice magic. This is because it's to test the difference between Gummi Slime and Tur Turtle. Four people start running while the snow dances. Does it become snow when it is an Ice Storm?

I also give chase while casting Ice magic once again. Four people arrive at the demons. This time they don't use area of effect magic. It's a good sign right at the start.

The demons all fell at the same time. Four people only just arrived at the demons. Even if Water attribute is resisted, Ice magic still seems to be a weak point of Tur Turtle.

So, the demons fell quickly. Basic Ice Magic is more powerful than regular basic magic. It is because of this that the low level demons are falling this quickly. Battle time has immediately shortened.

"This is quite good."

I did not even reach the demons. I ran to join up with the four people.

"As expected of Master."
"It seems that Grand Wizard really has greater magic power than Wizard."
"Fast, desu."
"I didn't think it would be so amazing."

The last thing you would want to hear from a girl is that you're fast. I received the dropped items.

Then we came across a group of 3 demons — Tur Turtle, Gummy Slime and Clam Shell. I fire a volley of three shots using Wizard's Basic Earth Magic. It feels like there is a dust cloud mixed in with the snow. When compared to the snow of the Ice Storm the sand of Sand Storm would feel just a little dusty. Luxury is an enemy.

By the second shot, the Clam Shell became smoke. Again this is fast. If it is a demon of the lower level, it ends up an easy victory.

At the third barrage, Tur Turtle falls. Even this is fast. It was faster than before after mixing the Sand Storm in.

Even using the basic magic of Wizard has an effect if used properly. It is a difference in the weakness of Earth attribute that causes the Gummi Slime to not fall. The remaining Gummi Slime will probably fall if hit with one shot of Burn Ball or Aqua Ball or Wind Ball. I do not know whether or not to take down the enemy with a basic magic shot.

However, there is no gap to shoot. Roxanne stands in front of the demon enemy, three other people surround the demon, I'm still further back. It is difficult to aim only at the demon with magic attack from this position.

Even though only one Gummi Slime is left, should I use an area of effect magic attack? When I was think that, the movement of the demon stopped. It is paralysis. This is a chance.

"Everyone move back!"

I cry out and cast Burn Ball. I will not let this opportunity go to waste. A ball of fire appears overhead.

Burn Ball is about the same size as the Wizard's Fire Ball. Not much change in size. However it feels hotter. It is the normal orange color so it's not a thousand times hotter.

The Burn Ball went flying towards the Gummi Slime. It is traveling at quite a speed. The speed is above that of Fire Ball. Faster than that of a ball in a game of tennis.

I say tennis but I mean the lawn tennis you did in high school

classes. Moreover, it was hitting the ball against a wall. In the class I almost always hit against the wall. Leave me alone (Don't judge me).

Even if it was fired from further away, it would be difficult to avoid with this speed. The Burn Ball passes beside Roxanne and crashes into the Gummi Slime. The Gummi Slime fell. After all, there was only one hit remaining?

The number of times I can fire magic increased and even the type increased as well. It has become bothersome to calculate the shots, so I don't waste any. Well, it can't be helped.

"Yes, desu."

Running to join up, Miria passed me the slime starch. It's also annoying that I can't join in the combat at the end. Should I have them return to me at the end again? I wonder how that would work.

"There seems to be a little problem but does it seem to be alright?"
"We have it easier thanks to Master."
"It is thanks to Roxanne that I can make it easier for everyone."

Because there is no change in the need to approach the demon while running, Roxanne and the rest still can't relax. Combat time is shortened. It is better to approach the demons in order to cancel the area of effect magic attack, even if the possibility is just a little.

I'd like to try other magic but Lightning magic would be good to use when going to the 25th floor. Other attributes can be used depending on the combination of monsters. We advanced towards the boss room.

I recover MP along the way. It is good that combat time has shortened but the petrification of demons by Miria has also almost disappeared which kinda hurts. Easily absorbing MP from a petrified monster has stopped happening.

If a petrified monster does not remain, then there is no choice but to assault moving demons with Durandal. I rush to the Tur Turtle and Gummi Slimes in a group of two.

Three monsters against three people. Since an area of effect magic

attack has been used once, only a Tur Turtle is left. Roxanne used Area of Effect Healing from the back.

I swung Durandal into the Gummi Slime. I somehow avoided the counter attack and gave another blow in return. Because there is no room for the job of Warrior, Rush cannot be used. Since I am using Item Box, I cannot remove Adventurer.

Before I finish the Gummi Slime, Miria paralyzed the Tur Turtle. I would like to attack it since I won't be counterattacked when attacking a paralyzed demon but it is better to leave it to Miria and Vesta. Even if I do get counterattacked I can recover quickly due to Durandal. It does hurt, though.

"Did it, desu."

Miria has petrified the other Gummi Slime. For it to happen this early in a lengthy battle, I am thankful. Two of the three at the front have stopped moving now.

"Miria, go to the demon at the back."

Miria went to delay the Tur Turtle as instructed by Roxanne. Since the second row often uses magic, I will keep them company and go to them. I can cancel the area of effect magic attack with Durandal. I went towards them as soon as I finished the Gummi Slime.

"Did it, desu."

I finally defeated the Gummi Slime that had been my enemy from the beginning. At almost the same time, the Tur Turtle, that Miria was attacking, was petrified.
As expected of Miria. Splendid.
Since combat time is normally shorter, petrification no longer proc's regularly, so keeping Durandal out to recover MP has become necessary. Because Abnormal Status by Miria seems to activate in longer fights, it's not too big of a problem.

We surround the paralyzed Tur Turtle with everyone to defeat it. Before Miria could turn it to stone, I took care of it. The remaining two petrified animals were taken care of by me. It would be good if we continued like this.

Before arriving at the boss room, I also tried using Dirt Storm when we came across three Tur Turtles. Dirt Storm, Sand Storm, combined with Ice Storm. Sand, snow and dirt dance. After two volleys of three shots, the demons fell to the first Dirt Storm.

Faster than the triple combo of Ice Storm, Ice Storm and Sand Storm. The weakness of the demon seems more Dirt Storm than Ice Storm.

Well, that's to be expected. If Basic Ice Magic is lower-class than Intermediate Earth Magic in power when I attacked the weak attribute, Ice magic might be compatible with higher ranking Earth magic. There is a possibility of difference in the consumption of MP. Normally, for the demons with the Earth attribute weakness, it would be more effective to pinpoint which is more effective; Intermediate Earth Magic or Basic Ice Magic.

Because I did not meet a group of Gummi Slimes by themselves, I was not able to confirm it with the Water attribute. The circumstances will be the same even with the Water attribute, probably. I entered the waiting room after supplementing my MP with Durandal. I receive the briefing from Sherry in the waiting room.

"The boss of Tur Turtle is Total Turtle. Like Tur Turtle, it's resistant to Water attribute and weak to the Earth attribute. Since the Total Turtle specializes in biting attacks, please be careful. Once it bites, it will not let go unless it is attacked with Lightning magic."

It is a soft-shelled turtle. It looks like a fearful enemy who does not let go if it bites.

I pass Durandal to Vesta and adjusted my jobs. Because I depend on Miria inflicting Abnormal Status in a boss battle, I had better put on Gambler. Because I am using the Item Box, I cannot remove Adventurer. I add the seventh job and add Gambler.

This is the first time I have up to seven jobs. Even though I have a good number of jobs, this number will likely end up not being enough. Common sense would mean that the Wizard being only able to use basic magic would be a candidate for removal.

Smoke gathered when I entered the boss room and three demons appeared. There is a Tur Turtle and a Gummi Slime, and in the center is Total Turtle. Tur Turtle has a bulging cylindrical body, like a barrel. The body of the Total Turtle has a normal flat shape. It's just a turtle.

But the shell is covered in grass. It has a head like a crocodile, feet like an elephant, a tail like a fish, and the shell covered in grass. If you look at the separate parts, it doesn't really look like a turtle. However, it is a turtle when viewed as a whole. So it's a turtle in total, huh?

Dirt Storm, Sand Storm and Ice Storm in a triple combo were cast. I also cast Abnormal Status Resistance Down on the Gummi Slime Miria is approaching. Since Total Turtle and Tur Turtle have the same weakness attribute, it is the correct decision for Miria to take charge of the remaining Gummi Slime. Roxanne and Sherry move to the boss while Vesta runs to the Tur Turtle.

Taking a little detour, I moved to the back of the boss. I stab with the Sacred Spear during the intervals between magic. Since I do not know whether it was effective to attack the shell, I mainly aimed at the foot. Rather than a giant tortoise or elephant, the foot of the Total Turtle is like a big pillar of meat.

You must be cautious of the tail because a kick won't be able to reach me. Because I hit it with a spear, the distance opens up to some extent. Roxanne is in charge of the head that won't let go if it bites you. However, if it's Roxanne, it should be safe enough.

"Did it, desu."

While being cautious of the tail, Miria has petrified the Gummi Slime. Almost at the same time, Vesta defeats the Tur Turtle. Because magic offensive ability rose, this too is fast. I was not able to give the decisive blow.

"As expected. I'll rely on you for the boss like this."

Abnormal Status Resistance Down was applied to the Total Turtle. I fire a Dirt Ball, Ice Ball and Sand Ball towards the boss in sequence.

“Did it, desu.”

The boss turned to stone right away. As I thought, Miria’s efforts really shine during boss battles. It is a complete victory. I had Vesta return Durandal and cleaned up the Gummi Slime and the boss.

When the boss falls and becomes smoke, a shell-ish thing remains. It seems to be called “soft shell” when I try to appraise it. The Total Turtle even drops a soft shell item, so it really is a soft-shelled turtle, huh?

“Soft shell?”
“It is a material for anti-petrifaction medicine.”

Sherry told me. It becomes anti-petrifaction medicine because it’s called soft shell. I feel like that’s a little too simplistic.

Chapter 161 - Lightning

After selecting Herbalist and creating softening medicine, I move to 25th floor.
Will I be able to obtain intermediate job of Herbalist once it reaches Lv50?
However, it is really troublesome to level it up to Lv50.
I only try it now and then. It will be much easier to level it up when I go to higher floors.

“Sherry, which monster appears on Quratar’s 25th floor?”
“Black Frog. It is resistant to Water magic and it can use area of effect water magic attack. It is weak against Fire attribute. Its skin is slimy and it can repel blade unless slashed skillfully.”

Frog, huh?
Its weakness seems to be Fire magic.
However, now is not the time to set Intermediate Fire Magic as the skill of Jobless.
The Wind magic will be effective if I move to Haruba’s 25th floor.

Should I try to engage in one or two battles while keeping Ice magic as the skill of Jobless?
Black Frog has resistance to Water magic but not to Earth magic, so I can use Ice magic.
Using Ice magic will be optimal in case Gummy Slime and Tur Turtle appear, too.

“Roxanne, can you please lead us to a place with Black Frogs?”
“Understood.”

I should have specified ‘a place with a small number’ but Roxanne probably understood what I meant.
We advance under Roxanne’s guidance.
We encounter a group of monsters.
It is a group of 3 Black Frogs and 1 Tur Turtle.

So she did not understand it, after all?

Nope, since there are three Black Frogs, the three vanguards can take on one each.
So she understood it to some extent, huh?

Because the number of Black Frogs is higher, I cast [Burn Storm], [Ice Storm] and [Fire Storm] in succession.
Whether the Fire and the Ice magic can be used simultaneously or not, there is no way to know but to test it out.
Will they offset each other?.

Black Frog, like its name indicates, is a frog the color of which is black.
Because it is big in size, it looks gross.
If it had a scroll in its mouth, I would stand atop its head.

Although its back is black, its abdomen is white.
It is not the best of the camouflages.
If it advanced while showing only its back, it would be tough battling it for everyone except Miria.

Roxanne, Miria and Vesta strike their respective opponents.
Without the girls receiving a single attack, the three Black Frogs collapse.
Since the duration of battles has shortened, there is no problem.

Using the Ice and the Fire magic at the same time seems to be fine.
Thereafter, I finish the remaining Tur Turtle off with [Dirt Ball], [Sand Ball] and [Ice Ball].
I shot a single target magic attack at a time. Eventually, it took three.

I'm not sure if [Sand Ball] was needed or not.
I thought it would collapse after [Dirt Ball] and [Sand Ball] but it did not.
Maybe I would have been able to kill it using [Dirt Ball] and [Ice Ball].
This floor is not the ideal but we will have to fight nonetheless.

"Since we have fought Black Frogs, how about moving to Haruba's labyrinth?"
"Yes, I guess. It will be alright, I think."

After receiving Roxanne's approval, I move to Haruba's 25th floor.

As for the skill of Jobless, I leave it unchanged to Ice magic.
The Wind magic is effective against Gumi Slime and Cyclops but it is preferred to use it one at a time.
There is another option: Lightning magic.

Should I ask Roxanne to initially search for either of the monsters?
Or should I search for both the Gumi Slime and the Cyclops since I want to test Wind magic?
But it will be a waste to use the Ice magic against Cyclops.

Should I search for a combination of Gumi Slime and Scissor Lizard then?
The Ice magic is effective against both the Gumi Slime and the Scissor Lizard.
Well, any would do, I guess.
It should be fine leaving it to chance.

I stop thinking about it and kick off the exploration without any instruction.
First group we encounter comprises two Gumi Slimes, one Cyclops and one Scissor Lizard.
Conducting a number of tests will be possible when there is a variety of monsters.
Leaving it to chance was the right decision.

Against Gumi Slime, both the Wind and the Ice magic are effective.
I launch a barrage of three spells — [Wind Storm], [Ice Storm] and [Breeze Storm].
Since I'm using Intermediate Wind Magic and the Ice magic, the Gumi Slime should fall first.

Wizard's Basic Wind Magic, [Breeze Storm], should be effective equally against Cyclops and Gumi Slime.
Gumi Slime does not have any weakness against Earth magic.
With the types of magic and the types of monsters increasing, the difficulty of decision-making is increasing, too.

I have no choice but to think it through.
To keep myself from getting laughed at by Sherry.
It would be embarrassing if they thought that their master is having problems.

Amidst the storm, the Gumi Slimes turn into smoke after three barrages of three spells.
Next, I try casting [Wind Storm].
The Cyclops collapses.
One was enough to finish the Cyclops off?

I shoot an [Ice Ball] at the remaining Scissor Lizard.
The Lizard has yet to fall.
I fire a [Sand Ball] next to finish it off.
In order to take a Lv25 Scissor Lizard out, 4 Intermediate Wind Magic + 4 Basic Ice Magic + 3 Basic Wind Magic + 1 Basic Earth Magic was needed.

I wonder if I will be able to use the optimum combination of magic if I solve this equation.
It seems unreasonable, seriously.
And there still is Lightning magic which I have yet to try.
As it is, even Sherry will not be able to solve it.

This would do for now.
I can reliably measure the difference in power of various magic if I move to a lower floor where I can take a monster out in one spell but there is no need to go to that extent.
And even if did, it would be of no use against Lv25 monsters.

After accumulating enough battle experience, I should be able to feel it naturally.
When I do, I will move on to 26th floor.
And strangely, I'm doing it.

Next, we encounter a group of two Gumi Slimes and one Cyclops.
I try [Thunder Storm], [Ice Storm] and [Breeze Storm].
It was my first [Thunder Storm].
Amidst the fluttering snow, something seems to be flashing *chikachika*.

The flash is not distinct, though.
It is flashing dimly.
Is it alright to call it lightning?
It would be a problem if I received a shock, however.

After a barrage of three spells, the Gumi Slime stops moving.
It has been paralyzed.
Because Miria has yet to reach that monster, it must be due to my Lightning magic.
I wonder for how long it will remain paralyzed.

The remaining Gumi Slime charges.
Roxanne takes it on from the front.
Miria and Vesta surround it from the sides.

When the Cyclops, that was obstructed by the Wind magic, arrives, Miria confronts it.
As [Ice Storm] is effective against Gumi Slime, and [Breeze Storm] effective against both Gumi Slime and Cyclops, only the Cyclops is left among this lineup in the end.
Letting Miria, who is holding the Estoc of Petrifaction, take care of the Cyclops was the right decision

However, the reason as to why Miria is taking on the Cyclops is because there are two Gumi Slimes and one Cyclops.
Since it was a combination of two-to-one, I would be taking care of the larger number first.
Although I have got a hang of the attributes of magic, I'm still unable to solve the equation.

Soon after the Cyclops comes to the front, I launch second barrage of three spells.
Paralysis did not proc this time.
As soon as I thought that, the Cyclops stops moving.
It is probably due to Miria's attack.

Paralysis did not proc even after third barrage of three spells.
None of the monsters has turned into smoke either.
Intermediate Wind Magic is more effective against Gumi Slime and Cyclops, after all.
The Lightning magic is probably similar to the Ice magic. Using intermediate magic to attack the weakness will be better.

Next, I try casting [Wind Storm].
The two Gumi Slimes collapse.
Is this how far a Gumi Slime can make it?

Only the Cyclops is left. Per Roxanne's instruction, the four of them clear the front.
She does understand it well.
I send out a [Breeze Ball].
But the Cyclops has not gone down.

"Did it, desu."

Even though it did not go down, it has been petrified by Miria.
The Cyclops was already paralyzed. With no fear of counterattack, she attacked it aggressively from the side, most likely.
I take Durandal out and run to the four of them.

I wanted to check as to when will the Cyclops collapse but it cannot be helped now that it has been petrified.
The monsters become weak to magic when petrified.
It will complicate the equation.

"Was that Lightning magic?"
"That's right."

I strike the Cyclops using Durandal while answering Sherry's question.
The petrified Cyclops goes down after one hit.
It had accumulated a lot of damage already, it seems.

"But it felt like you used the Lightning, the Ice and the Wind magic."
"I did."

Sherry is at a loss for words.
This might probably be the first time I used the magic of three different attributes at the same time.
I was able to add one more to the number of spells I can cast simultaneously after I acquired Grand Wizard.
But I will not tell her.
It would not end at just that. It would raise various other questions.

I shot Lightning magic thrice but paralysis proc'd only once.
Since the number of times I attempted it is not much, I cannot say with certainty but it seems to have its limits.
It can proc more if the number of monsters increases.

Or I can perhaps cast it twice at the same time if I set it as the skill of Jobless.

However, using Intermediate Wind Magic against both the Gumi Slime and the Cyclops is better.
Although the difference in the number of spells required to take it out is originally not much, there is a difference nonetheless.
If it makes a difference in the duration of battles, using Intermediate Wind Magic will be better.

Gumi Slimes and Cyclopes appear more often on Haruba's 25th floor.
However, it is better to have Lightning magic instead of Intermediate Wind Magic on Haruba's 25th floor since I would have a hard time if Scissor Lizards appeared.
There are not that many groups with that combination, though.
On a floor where many groups of monsters with opposing weaknesses and resistances appear, it will be better to set Basic Lightning Magic as the skill of Jobless.

Should I set Intermediate Wind Magic as the skill of Jobless then?
I invoke Skill Settings and set the skill of Jobless to Intermediate Wind Magic.

We encounter a group of Gumi Slimes and Cyclopes, two each, next. I slaughter them using only Wind magic.
A barrage of three spells — [Wind Storm], [Wind Storm] and [Breeze Storm].
To be exact, two barrages of three spells and an additional [Wind Storm].
The Cyclopes collapsed without getting a chance to do anything.

After all, it is more effective to use Wind magic when the monster's weak point is Wind attribute.
I can fight on Haruba's 25th floor without any trouble.
Without specifying any monster, I proceed with exploring the labyrinth.

The only problem with killing them quickly is that Miria's petrifaction will not proc much.
It is more of a luxury concern.

Should I mix in a Scissor Lizards or two then?
Miria will be able to neutralize them that way.

We continue to explore till the evening without encountering any problem.
We come across a group comprising a Gumi Slime, a Cyclops and a Scissor Lizard.
I take care of the Gumi Slime and the Cyclops first.
With a lone monster left, Roxanne and Miria open up a line for the Scissor Lizard.

The Scissor Lizard does not stop moving.
I should try [Thunder Ball] here.
I will be able to restrict the movement of Scissor Lizard by inflicting paralysis.

I have yet to use a single target Lightning magic attack.
This is my first chance.
I cast [Thunder Ball].

A bright ball emerges overhead.
Lightning is coiling around the ball.
Ooh

Somehow, it looks cool.
Yep, it does look cool.
It looks same as the props used in the background when a Demon Lord makes appearance.
It is a flashing Thunder Ball of lightning.

KUKKUKKU
People of Yamato.
My name is Gore.

The [Thunder Ball] flies.
However, the Scissor Lizard neither got paralyzed nor got killed after getting hit.
A failure?
Although it is an enemy, for it to be able to keep standing after receiving the attack is appreciable.

I launch Wizard's [Sand Ball] but the Scissor Lizard endures it.
After a pause, it starts running and closes in.

Next, I fire a barrage of three spells.
With this Thunder Ball, surely.
I will kill it with this [Thunder Ball], surely.

"Did it, desu."

Huh?
The lizard stops moving.
What? Petrified?
WhydidyouhavetodosomethingwhichIwasabouttodo!

Oh well. Now that it has been petrified, I can finish it off using magic.
I would have preferred to use Durandal, though, to deal the finishing blow in order to recover MP.
This is the first time I feel displeased with Miria's petrifaction.

Chapter 162 - Ester Baron

When we return home after hunting and buying a large quantity of milk, there was a message from Luke.
I leave both the activities for the next day.
After enjoying the fried whole fish (it was actually Miria who enjoyed it), taking bath and producing a large quantity of ice, I go to the bed.
With the bed surrounded by five buckets of ice, it feels refreshing.

I wonder if the room temperature has fallen by 1-2 degrees.
But it's just 1-2 degrees. Well, it's still 1-2 degrees.
It's some achievement to cool a midsummer night, which tends to be quite hot, down a bit.
I need a human cooler.

Setting up five buckets, with one person carrying a bucket each, was no issue.
Roxanne gleefully carried a bucket from the bathroom.
Lately, it has been getting too hot sticking to all the members while sleeping.
I have no intention of stopping, though, of course.

I put the buckets on a piece of cloth which I laid out.
Otherwise, it would wet the floor.
A bucket that gets wet is not a good bucket.
I don't think the molten ice is particularly leaking, though.

The next morning, I receive the Kobold Monster Card from Luke.
I hand it to Sherry along with the Wind Resistant Damascus Steel Forehead Protector and the Mermaid Monster Card.

"……This one has multiple skills already, doesn't it?"
"It's alright."

For she fused herself, she clearly remembers.
Sherry's eyes are swimming.
I can't let you off just because of that.

"I-I'll try."

“As expected of Sherry.”

Since I was tired, I had put the items on the table. Sherry picks the forehead protector up.
Wind Resistance, Fire Resistance and Water resistance skills have been attached but the name has still not changed.
That’s the way it’s supposed to be, I guess.

We go to and stay in the labyrinth till the evening. After returning, I collect the fresh cream.
I have recalled about the fresh cream. Some years back, I watched a show on TV where they made ice cream at home.
They definitely used fresh cream.
If I remember correctly, they added egg yolk, too.
I remember them saying how it tasted like egg, so I can’t be mistaken.
Also, they heated it over fire, I think.
Although I don’t understand it fully, it’s better to heat the milk, which was left as is for a day, over fire before using it.

After preparing the bath, I heat the fresh cream, milk, egg yolk and sugar over fire, and gently mix it.
After it was mixed, I remove it from fire and put it in the container with salted ice. I have Vesta stir it until it’s chilled.
Because it’s the second time, there’s no problem in having Vesta do it.

Quantities of ingredients are about right. Even if it fails, we will have sherbet, at least.
I add a bit of egg white.
Using low fat milk in stew is not recommended but it can’t be helped.
I have to compromise.

“Umm, it seems to be going well but it hasn’t hardened.”

Vesta reports.
When I check, it looked a lot like ice cream.

“Ooh, it’s good. It’s a success. You did well.”
“Is it really good?”
“It’s nicely smooth. After stirring it a little more, we will leave it to

chill in the ice."
"Okay, understood."

Only, it's strangely yellow.
Did I add too much egg yolk?
I'm worried now. Doesn't 'egg flavored ice cream' sound a bit odd?

We try the dessert after the dinner.
I take a scoop with a wooden spoon and put it in my mouth.
It's smooth and soft, and slowly melts on your tongue.
It's delicious.

It's a true ice cream.
I didn't eat such a delicious ice cream even back in Japan.
The rich cream has a tender flavor.
If this is ice cream, what was it that I ate back in Japan?

Is it because of the natural ingredients? Or because of the time and effort I put in?
That it's smooth shows how well Vesta stirred it.

"Master, it's really delicious."
"It's sweet, it's chilly and it melts in your mouth. It's amazing."
"Amazing, desu."
"It's soft. I think it's amazing."

It's not 'I think it's amazing', it actually is amazing!
It seems to have received great reviews from the four of them.

"It's Vesta who stirred it which made it so delicious, so thank you."
"Not at all."
"When I make it next time, I'll have to trouble you."
"Leave it to me, please."

Vesta says, gratified.
It'll be even more delicious next time because I have already succeeded once.

The next day, I try to make jelly.
While making the breakfast, I put some water, some fruit the name of which I don't know, kobold sucrose and coral gelatin in a pot, and heat it over fire.

I put some ice in a bucket and leave the pot to cool inside the bucket for a day.

I replaced the ice twice during the day, once at noon and once at dusk. By the dinner, it had chilled.
It's a chilly and *purupuru* jiggly dessert.
Unlike ice cream, it can be made in large quantity.

"The one yesterday was delicious but this one is terrific, too."
"That's right. Compared to the one yesterday, this one is light. It slips down the throat so easily."
"Tasty, desu."
"Will I get to eat such dishes everyday?"

Jelly is easy to make, it refreshes you, and it's definitely a dessert.
The fruits in this world are too sour, so you don't find many desserts.
With jelly, however, there's no problem because it contains sugar.
Pineapple doesn't harden successfully but this fruit hardened properly.

You can simply leave it to cool.
You don't have to maintain low temperature like in case of ice cream.
It's easy and convenient.
All you need is ice.

If you have ice, you can use it in many ways. It really is convenient.
Other than ice cream, there's another thing I can make. Frozen yogurt, that is.
Since it's claimed to be low fat and low calorie, fresh cream won't be an issue.

"Yogurt……There's that, too."

I'm glad.
That it was properly translated to Brahim.
I try to enquire from the four of them.

"I think it will be available in the winter."
"Winter?"
"That's right."

Roxanne replies.

Yogurt seems to be a seasonal item in this world.
So that's the reason why I haven't seen it yet.
Would there really be any need to make frozen yogurt in winter?

"If you go to a farm, it may be available there."

Sherry interjects.
Where's the farm? I have yet to see one.
Well, I have yet to look for one specifically.

"Why don't they sell it here?"
"Basically, only milk is consumed in the summer. Yogurt appears in the winter because milk is completely consumed by then."
"Is that so?"
"Is that really so?"

Roxanne wasn't aware as to why yogurt appears in winter, it seems. However, the reason as to why she is surprised is most likely not the same as to why I'm surprised.
Why is there no milk in the winter?
Why is it seasonal?

"Cows bear calves in the spring season. They produce milk for half a year postnatally. Therefore, milk is available from early spring till early fall. In the winter, the aged milk is converted to yogurt. In this region, yogurt is the winter food."

Indeed, a cow doesn't produce milk unless it bears a calf.
Cows bear calves in the spring and produce milk for half a year thenceforth.
Therefore, fresh milk isn't available for the rest of the seasons.
Furthermore, yogurt is fermented milk. It can be preserved for longer period.

"I didn't know that. As expected of Sherry."
"Thank you very much."
"Amazing, desu."

I thought Sherry's eyes would be cold again that I didn't know even such a trivial thing but they were not.
It doesn't seem to be general knowledge for even Roxanne and

Miria weren't aware of it.
Although Miria said 'amazing', we weren't talking about fish, so it must merely be superficial.

"Did you know about it, Vesta?"
"My previous master had cows, so we used to squeeze milk for half a year. It was a good work because we got to drink milk. There, they used to produce cheese, too."

So you're supposed to know that only if you have cows?
Vesta seems to like milk.
Or all the dairy products, perhaps?
Dairy products, huh?

"Milk……"

Sherry mutters.
The same night, I make full use of the milk.
When the dawn breaks, I'll have to go to the Duke of Harz.
After hunting early morning, I rearrange the jobs and head to the Bode castle.

"The leader is waiting for you in the office."

When I go to the reception, they let me in without authorization.
When I'm alone, they are not cautious.
Rather than 'not cautious', it's more like 'careless'.

Do they allow anyone who they're familiar with inside the castle?
I don't know any other place inside the castle other than the office.
I arrive in front of the office and knock the door.

"Come in."

It's Gozer's voice.
He seems to be here today.

"It's Michio."
"Ooh, Michio-dono. We were waiting for you."

When I go in, the Duke receives me.
This time, there's one more person inside apart from the Duke and

Gozer.
A huge, dog-eared Holy Knight. And a male.
He's tall and imposing.

"Hou, so this man was the one who defeated Sabo Baradam, huh?"

He suddenly starts talking to me.
His head is covered by the droopy dog-ears.
At first glance, it is difficult to tell that they are dog-ears.
They look just like a Saint Bernard's ears.

"Err"
"Michio-dono defeated him in a duel."

When I was flustered at the abrupt question, Gozer supports.
Duel?
I did have a duel with someone from Baradam family.

"Although Sabo Baradam was a violent person, his ability was on par with me in the wolfkin tribe. If you were able to defeat him, then I don't have any objection."
"There's no doubt that Michio-dono defeated him. I was there as a witness."

That he said 'I don't have any objection', he seems to be a member of the Empire Liberation Society.
Or is he perhaps the examiner?

"Michio-dono, his name is Ester. He will be conducting the Empire Liberation Society entry test."

The Duke introduces him.
So he's the examiner, after all.

"I'm Ester."
"Michio here."
"As for his official position."
"No, there's no need. My official position has no relation to my position in the Empire Liberation Society."

The man declines to be introduced any further.
I already know via Appraisal that he's Ester Baron, Ester Esterretse

n'Esterra.
His name is quite complicated.
Either of his parents could do without 'Ester' in their name.

"Oh well, if Ester says so."
"Michio can call me Ester. There's no need for honorifics. I'll call you Michio, too."
"Okay."

Because he didn't introduce himself as a noble, there's no problem in calling him normally.
If I had a noble post, it would be great.

"Just in case, I'll explain it to you again. The Empire Liberation Society is a support organization which exists for those who aim to liberate the empire from the labyrinths. If you become a member, you'll have to fight in the labyrinths everyday in order to clear the labyrinths and work hard in order to improve yourself. This will be your only obligation."

Ester explains.
There doesn't seem to be many duties and restrictions.
So there shouldn't be any problem if I join, right?

I already fight in the labyrinths.
As for the improving oneself part.

"Is there no other obligation?"
"Because you were recommended by Brocken, Michio, you are an exception. You'll have to clear 45th floor within the next 20 years. Other members of the Empire Liberation Society are able to fight on the floors beyond 45th."

Brocken is the Duke of Harz's name.
This person really doesn't care about titles at all.

"45th floor?"
"If you are able to clear ahead of time, the date of your test can be accelerated and you can take it whenever you like. Even if you're not able to clear 45th floor within 20 years, you'll only be asked to withdraw from the group, so you don't have to be worried."

“Oh well, I’m not worried.”

It’s one floor per year, so it’s not unreasonable.
For a person who aims to reach the top of the labyrinth.
If I cleared one floor a year, I’d be 45 years old by the time I clear 45th floor. I don’t want that.

“Discrimination against other races is prohibited. The Empire Liberation Society aims to liberate everyone regardless of their race. I want you to observe that.”
“I understand.”
“One more thing, you cannot leak any inside information of the Empire Liberation Society to outsiders. Especially, information related to the members. You can’t tell anyone that you’re a member either. This rule is in place because the labyrinths, in order to defend themselves, launch counterattack against those who fight with the objective of killing them. They may also resort to cowardly methods which may not be limited to assassination.”

Is this the reason as to why it’s a secret society?
I think it’s just their imagination.
However, that they are claiming so confidently, they must have a reason to back it.

“What do you mean by ‘outsiders’? Is talking about it to my party members not allowed either?
“Normally, only the representative of the party is admitted to the group. If the representative joined the group, it would be difficult to keep it confidential from other party members.”

I don’t have to keep it a secret from Roxanne and the girls.
Which reminds me, Gozer is here as well. Does it mean that Gozer is a member, too?

Chapter 163 - Admission Test

"If that's the case, then the admission test can be taken with all the party members, right?"

I continue to talk with Ester Baron who was introduced as the examiner by the Duke of Harz.

"Ordinarily, that is so. However, if you want to remove specific party members and take the test with the rest of the party members, you can. I won't object."
"Okay, I will take the test with all my party members."

I deny, flurried.
It's not like I asked this because I don't want my party members to be noticed.
It would be difficult if I challenged the labyrinth with fewer party members.

"In some cases, the party members are part of the order of knights which is allowed. Normally, however, the admission test is taken by the party as a whole. If you can't arrange for independent party members, you'll not be qualified to join."
"Can I bring helpers?"
"That's not allowed."
"Un, I see."

Bringing as many with you as you like is cheating, indeed.

"There's no use in cheating your way through the admission test. The Empire Liberation Society is not meant for those who don't have the will to fight in the labyrinths. Even if you forcibly join, there's nothing in it for you."

Noticing my expression, Ester adds to his explanation.
After all, I can't brag outside that I'm a member of the Empire Liberation Society.
No one joins to show off.
If that's the case, there's no need for the test. If someone thinks that

they don’t have the required ability to fight in the labyrinths, they won’t think about joining in the first place.

“How do I take the admission test?”
“You’ll first have to demonstrate that you have the ability to fight. The test venue will be Quratar’s 23rd floor. Thereafter, we will go to the boss room. Before going to the boss room, if I judge that the level of your ability is inadequate, you’ll fail the test then and there. Even if I forcibly pitted you against the boss, it wouldn’t serve any purpose. If you are able to clear the boss room, you’ll move to 24th floor. If I judge that you can safely fight on 24th floor, you’ll pass.”

Because only one party can enter the boss room, the boss battle won’t be invigilated.
Ester Baron won’t be joining the party either.
Although a referee in recommended for the test, observing from the back will work, too.
After all, it’s not safe for a one man party to enter the labyrinth.

If I didn’t want to join, I could perform terribly but that’s not possible now.
Also, if I forcibly put myself in a pinch, I would risk my life.
Neither I can make the Duke, who recommended me, lose face nor does the Empire Liberation Society seem shady.
Should I fight seriously then?

“When is the test?”
“If you’re fine with it, right away.”
“Fine by me.”

Because he will be observing the battles to assess our ability, I won’t be able to use magic but I can always use Durandal.
There’s no need to warm up.
Because the boss battle won’t be invigilated, I’ll be able to fight freely.

“Can you go to Quratar’s labyrinth? The entrance of 23rd floor, to be specific.”
“I can go to 23rd floor. I enter Quratar’s labyrinth on and off.”
“Well then, I’ll meet you in the small room at the entrance of 23rd floor shortly.”

“Got it.”

Because I’m supposed to enter Harz duchy labyrinths, it may be taken wrongly that I have already reached Quratar’s 23rd floor.
Should I have told a lie that I haven’t been there?
I haven’t met anyone from the Harz duchy in Quratar’s labyrinth.
However, if the Duke and Gozer were already informed, it would create distrust.

I diligently explore Bode’s labyrinth, too.
So there’s no need for me to hide it.
Because of the admission test, many things, that should otherwise have remained hidden, have come to light.

Had I not been to Quratar’s labyrinth, he would probably have led me in after meeting outside the entrance.
It would have been troublesome, too.
Because I would have to pay the entry fee.
If we meet at 23rd floor, I will be able to enter for free.

Actually, if you enter the labyrinth through the entrance, you will enter the small room through the black wall at the entrance of the floor.
In case of Warp and Dungeon Walk, however, a separate black wall is created in the small room.
If Ester Baron were waiting there, he would find it out.
Should I pay the entry fee and enter safely then?

“Then I’ll go ahead and wait for you. Brocken, I’ll be off.”
“Aah, see you later.”

Ester Baron bids farewell to the Duke of Harz and leaves.
So fast.
He has gone ahead.

“Well then.”
“Although I know it’ll be easy for Michio-dono, still, all the best.”
“Keep calm during the test, please.”

I bow to the Duke and Gozer, and take my leave, too.
When I go out of the office, Ester Baron’s figure couldn’t be seen anywhere.

I wonder if I'll be able to reach Quratar's 23rd floor earlier if I hurry.
Because I'm not certain that I'll reach before him, it'll be risky.

Should I avoid the risk and pay the fee? It's not that high a floor, after all.
If I defeat the boss of 22nd floor, I'll be able to enter the small room through the black wall at the entrance of 23rd floor. However, there's no need to go to that extent.

What if we were to greet the order of Quratar knights after the test?
Ester might hear it from the order of Quratar knights.
Nope, it's not an option either.
Ester holds the position of Baron, after all.

After deciding to pay the entry fee, I leave the Bode castle and return home.
Because we have an urgent business, I have Roxanne and the girls put off the cleaning and what they were respectively doing.

"The Duke of Harz has recommended me to some group called the Empire Liberation Society. Their objective is to mutually support those who fight in the labyrinths."

I bring it up to the four of them.
If I am to take my time, it's better to explain it to them here at home.

"The Empire Liberation Society?"
"Only influential people are allowed to join this group. It's amazing."
"Is that so?"

Roxanne and Sherry are conversing.
I wonder if Sherry's impression of me has improved a bit.

Impression improved? What do you mean 'improved'?
I'm pretty sure Sherry thought that I was amazing from the beginning.
Undoubtedly.

"So it seems."
"As expected of Master."

The Duke has only watched Roxanne fight, however.

Did he recommend me due to Roxanne?
Did he perhaps want to recommend Roxanne, not me?
It would be understandable if it was due to Roxanne.

“The Empire Liberation Society requires us to observe the duty of confidentiality. That I’m a member must not be leaked outside nor the information relating to other members. There seem to be implications of leaking information unnecessarily.”
“I’ll be careful. It’s wonderful.”
“We are keeping so many secrets already. One or two more won’t make a difference.”

Roxanne seems to have agreed on keeping it a secret.
So has Sherry.
Hadn’t her impression of me improved?

“Secret, desu.”
“I think it’ll be alright.”

Miria will be able to remember some words from here and some words from there, so she needs to keep it a secret, too.

“We will go to Quratar’s 23rd floor where it’ll be assessed whether we have the ability to fight or not. I won’t be using magic; I’ll fight without using magic. Vesta will be using the sword.”
“Understood.”

Because I use Sacred Spear from the back, I let Vesta use Durandal.
Even though it’s the admission test, I don’t care.
At most, I’ll be denied admission, so what?

“For we have already cleared 23rd floor, we don’t have to be tensed. If we do it like we always do, there won’t be any problem.”
“Of course.”

Now that Roxanne has said ‘of course’, it should be alright, shouldn’t it?
I don’t want to engage in a battle which Roxanne isn’t sure about.

“This time, we will enter after paying the fee, so let’s go to the Adventurer’s guild first.”

Leaving the house, I Warp us to the Adventurer's guild.
From the Adventurer's guild, we walk to the entrance of the labyrinth.
Because we are used to shopping, walking this much distance isn't an issue.
I could Warp to Quratar's labyrinth, exit and re-enter but that might create suspicion.

"How about the map of the labyrinth?"

The office of the order of knights is still selling the maps.
They mean business.
Ah
I forgot the map.

"Do you remember the route of 23rd floor?"
"Yes, it'll be alright."

I whisper the question to Roxanne. It seems to be alright.
As expected, she doesn't overlook anything when it comes to the labyrinth.

"Well then, here's the entry fee for five."

I pay 5 silver coins and receive 5 thin pieces of paper in the name of tickets.
30% Discount should have worked, at least.
When we move to 23rd floor through the entrance, Ester Baron was already there, waiting.

Including Baron, there are six people.
I wonder if it's Ester's party.
The rest, excluding the Baron who's a Holy Knight, are Adventurer, Explorer, Grand Wizard, Beast King and Senior Priest. Wow, what a lineup.
Their levels are quite high, too.

Beast King must be the higher tiered than Beast Warrior.
It's my first time seeing one.
Senior Priest must be higher than priest.
It's my first time seeing this one, too.

Three females and three males, there's a balance between vanguards and rearguards in the party.
And it's full of veterans, too.
As you would expected from the examiners.

"Oh, Michio? Nice to see you again."

When I arrive at the entrance of the floor, Ester Baron calls out to me.

"Pleasure is mine."
"So this is Michio's party, huh?"
"Yes."
"Because we have been fighting on higher floors for a long time, we can give Michio's party some pointers. If you wish so, we can advance to the boss room at slow pace while fighting monsters. If you don't, we can go ahead and wait for you in the small room close to the boss room. So, how do you want it to be?"

I can choose?
I would like to not be seen as much as possible.
Because I don't know as to how other parties in this world fight, it will be helpful to receive pointers from them but my main fighting style is magic.

"Our fighting style is based on our equipment anyway, so you can go ahead and wait for us."
"Equipment, huh? Got it."

When I decline the offer, the Baron simply nods.
Although I came up with an excuse spontaneously, it seems to have gone well.
Indeed, if the fighting style is based on equipment, it'll change when the equipment changes.
That I can't use magic, I'll have to rely on Durandal, Miria's Estoc of Petrifaction and Sherry's spear with Incantation Interruption skill.

"Please."
"No one shows their cards, so it's not unusual to think that way. Don't be modest."

So other parties are same as us, huh?
No one wants to disclose how they fight.
The Baron simply nods and issues instructions to the Explorer of his party.
The Explorer invokes Dungeon Walk.

The black wall appears and the six of them go in.
Is that why he brought an Explorer as a party member?
I wonder if he's a temporary party member.
But he's high leveled, so it shouldn't be the case.

"Let's get moving, too? We will still be fighting without magic. Roxanne, guide us, please."
"Understood."
"Vesta, take this."
"Okay."

We decide to catch up with them.
Although we are not being observed, I decide against using magic because I have a bad feeling about it.
I hand Durandal to Vesta. I'll take it as a warm up.

I can use Dungeon Walk and move to the small room, where we are supposed to meet, but I decide against it.
He must have heard from the Duke that I'm an Adventurer.
As far as Explorer is concerned, I can make Sherry one but there's no need to go to that extent.
Piling lies up may backfire.

I have already set Adventurer as First Job.
Although setting Adventurer as First Job is adverse for bonus points, I have added Seventh Job in order to select Gambler.
Because I'll be using magic in the boss battle, I can't remove any of three magic based jobs — Jobless, Grand Wizard and Wizard.
I have set Intermediate Wind Magic as the skill of Jobless.

Under Roxanne's guidance, we reach the rendezvous point.
En route, Vesta took out the monsters without any trouble.

"You've come, huh? Although we checked some time ago, you may encounter a monster on your way to the boss room. I'll be observing

you from behind. If it's not a Gummi Slime, you may have to fight once more. Now go."

When we arrive at the small room, Ester Baron issues instructions.
We leave first and head to the boss room.

"There's a Gummi Slime and a Clamshell ahead. One each, most likely."

When we leave the small room, Roxanne whispers to me.
Although Ester Baron could find out that there was a monster, Roxanne could figure out the type and number of monsters, too.
I knew it was Roxanne who is terrifying.

"Thanks. As you would expect. Roxanne, Miria, I'll have to ask of you to take on the Gummi Slime."
"Understood."

Roxanne whispers something to Miria.
She's most likely telling that her opponent will be the Gummi Slime.

The monsters appear.
Like Roxanne said, there's a Gummi Slime and a Clamshell.
The four of them charge immediately.
After I cast Abnormal Status Resistance Down on the Gummi Slime, I follow after them.

I painstakingly added Gambler, after all, so I just can't not use it.
It's a skill the effect of which is not visible.

"Did it, desu."

Miria petrified the Gummi Slime before Vesta could take out the clamshell.
Isn't it a little too quick?
Oh well, it can't be helped.

Vesta tidies up the Clamshell and the petrified Gummi Slime.
The Baron can immediately figure out Durandal's power from the damage inflicted to the petrified monster but it can't be helped.
When the Gummi Slime turns into smoke, Ester Baron approaches me from the back.

“The speed of exterminating monsters wasn’t bad. I have nothing to critique in respect of the battle.”
“I’m glad.”

We’re one step closer to passing.

Chapter 164 - Lodge

"Now for the boss, but fight any demons on the way to the boss room as well."

Baron Ester gives us a message, and then returns to the back.

"There doesn't seem to be any demons before the boss room."

Roxanne lets me know with a whisper after the Baron was gone.
She's showing off their difference.
Well, maybe the Baron actually knows that there are no demons ahead as well.

Roxanne guides us towards the boss room.
We enter the waiting room without encountering any demons.
Just as Roxanne said.
There was nobody waiting in the waiting room.

"Only one party passed earlier, so the door should open straight away. We'll wait here until you go in, Michio."

Baron Ester speaks to us as he enters the standby room.
Only one party can enter the boss room.
I can use magic without worrying.
The door to the boss room opens straight away.

"Well then."

I nod to the Baron, and then head into the boss room.
Since I'm wearing Adventurer-use equipment, I don't have neither Alba nor Earring of Offerings on, and there's no time to equip them now.
It should be safe even without them.
Vesta has Durandal, and I have the Sacred Spear.

Should I prepare a different accessory with the [2x Intellect] skill for this kind of occasions?
It will be rare for me to be in a similar situation, so there is no

helping it, is there?
Smoke gathers, and the demons appear.

With [Incantation Omission], I use magic without holding back, and the demons are defeated.
Even without the Earring of Offerings, the boss fight ends safely.
Miria's petrifaction helped.

Miria petrified a Gumi Slime, and the boss.
Vesta defeated a Clamshell.
My equipment didn't make much difference.
Vesta cleans up the two petrified monsters with Durandal.

The combat time against the boss might be a part of the examination.
I feel like I should waste a bit more time, but I don't want that to fail us.
The demons are defeated, and we go to the 24th floor.

"That was quick."

It seems we are early.

"Really?"
"When you leave here, the Adventurer from my party will be waiting there for you. He'll take you to a lodge in the Imperial Capital. "
"Okay."

Baron Ester gives me instructions.
This isn't something we should discuss in the small entrance room.
It would be bad if someone heard about admission.
Will we go to a mountain cottage that the Baron has?

The Baron left through the black wall.
After receiving Durandal from Vesta and cancelling it, we followed as well.
Outside the Labyrinth, the Explorer recites the incantation for Party Formation.

He removes the Adventurer.
There are both an Adventurer and an Explorer in the Baron's party.
I also recite the incantation for Party Formation, and invite the

Adventurer to my party.

The Baron hurries off to the office of the order of knights.
We hurry after him, and it looks like he showed an emblem or something to the knights.
Is it similar to the emblem of the Duke of Harz which I have borrowed?

“I’ll be using your wall for travel.”
“Of course, Your Excellency.”

The knights in the office who saw the emblem respond with respect.
Is this the power that the emblem from the Duke has?
It might be more so the Baron himself.
It was the right choice for me to pay entry fee today.

“My group would like to go through as well.”

When the knight guides us to the back room, Baron Ester was waiting for us.
Was he waiting here to check how we entered the labyrinth?
Would he be here if he didn’t have doubts?
Well, we have the Adventurer from his party now, so he can’t go anywhere.

The Adventurer recites the incantation for [Field Walk], and a black wall appears.
We follow the Adventurer and enter the black wall.

“Welcome back Ralph-sama.”

We appear in a large building’s lobby.
An old gentleman receives us straight away.
It’s a grey-haired man with black trousers and black jacket.

His name is Sebastian.
He’s an Adventurer in his fifties.
Also, Ralph is the name of the Adventurer from the Baron’s party.

“I’ll be in your care.”
“It’s my duty.”
“I’ll return to meet the other members. Please take care of this

group.”
“I understand.”
“Okay then.”

The Adventurer from the Baron nods to the old man, and then looks at me.
Oh, do I have to remove you from the party?
The conversation between the old man and the Adventurer has ended.
I quickly remove the Adventurer from the party.

When I removed the Adventurer from the party, he made a wall and left.
Only the old man and us are left.
I say old man, but gives off the feeling of a butler.
Moreover, his name is Sebastian.

He has a soft, polite demeanor.
The atmosphere about his whole body seems to be courteous.
Is he the butler of Baron Ester?
He used honorific for the Adventurer from the Baron’s party as well.

“Welcome. First, would you tell me your name? Your family name and titles if you have them would be fine.”

The old gentleman gives me a bow.
Kaga is my last name.
Is that different to what he’s asking?
I’m not sure.

“Ah, my name is Michio Kaga.”[1]
“Michio-sama.”

Is it fine to say Michio Kaga?
Does it change anything?

“And the young ladies as well.”
“I’m Roxanne.”
“Roxanne-sama.”
“Ah…well, that…”

Roxanne is puzzled after he says her name.

He's very polite.
It's the feeling of a butler.

"Official position and the position you have in the world do not have any influence on this meeting. Please allow me this."
"Ah, yes."

Sebastian persuades Roxanne.
Our meeting will be about the Empire Liberation Society.
So this isn't the Baron's villa, but instead a building of the Empire Liberation Society?

"And you?"
"It's She-Sherry."
"Sherry-sama."

The old man's gaze falls on Sherry, and she introduces herself.
Maybe he's not just polite, but someone of influence?

"Miria-desu."
"Miria-sama."
"I'm Vesta."
"Vesta-sama."

Miria and Vesta had to introduce themselves as well.
From me through to Vesta, we introduce ourselves in the order of the party that Roxanne knows.
Nobody goes out of turn.
I'm in the centre. Next to me is Roxanne whom I can see. Then further apart are Sherry and the others whom I can't see.

This.
Can you remember it all?
It's strange.
Maybe I should say, as expected of Sebastian?

The Baron's party shows up while I was wondering.

"Ester-sama, I've been waiting."

The old man bows.
His bowing angle is amazing.

It’s almost 90 degrees.
Polite.

“Were you introduced to Michio?”
“Yes.”
“Michio is now a member of the first rank.”
“Certainly.”

Ester and Sebastian spoke.
I seem to have become a member of the first rank.
They’ve led me to a building of the Empire Liberation Society, so I must have passed the examination.

Since first rank is given to new people, is it like an underling?
If I don’t pass the 45th floor, then I’ll never become a regular member.
The first rank is private.
It would be soldier, but it becomes private if I think of the painter Yamashita.

“Please prepare a room, and some herbal tea.”
“Certainly. This way please.”

Sebastian politely gestures, and leads us.
Baron Ester enters the room we are guided to.
It’s a wide luxurious conference room.
The Baron takes a position in the center of the long table.

“Michio and his group, please sit down.”
“Yes.”

I also enter the room, and sit facing the Baron.
The chair is soft.
It’s a high quality one.

There are six chairs on either side, so Roxanne and everyone can sit to either side of me.
The other side is just Baron Ester.
The Adventurer and the Beast King also entered the room, but both stood behind Baron Ester.
His private guard.

“I think you’ve probably already guessed the results, you’ve passed the examination. Brocken recommended you, and I agree you have satisfactory ability. There is the aspect that you rely on weapons, but in you’re case Michio I can see you defeating a labyrinth in the near future. There shouldn’t be a problem.”
“Okay.”
“You don’t have to answer, but is the woman who stopped the demons movements an Assassin?”

Miria’s job seems to have been noticed.
The petrifaction probably happened too quickly.
Is it no use trying to hide it?

“That’s right.”
“I had heard that Assassins could put an enemy into an abnormal status quite quickly, but it was most splendid. To have it happen that quickly you must have acquired a lot of experience and training aside from just becoming an Assassin.”
“Yes.”

The Assassins improved chance of abnormal status might still increase if it’s level dependent.
It should still become a little easier as things progress.

But, the Baron only saw Miria’s petrifaction once.
He might still consider it luck.
He might have considered the combat time in the boss room as well and thought we have the ability to fight higher than the 23rd floor.
If he considers our combat like that, he can probably guess that Miria’s petrifaction plays a large role.

“Also, that woman’s movements who did not allow a demons attacks to come near her were also quite good.”

The Baron glanced at Roxanne.
The Duke praised Roxanne’s movements as well.
It’s natural to think that.

“It’s hard to get party members like her.”
“It might still be a ways off, but the last boss in a labyrinth has the ability to destroy equipment. If you receive an attack with a shield or

parry it with a sword, the shield and sword might break. The benefits in evading a demons attacks are quite large."
"Equipment can get destroyed?"

For the final boss to have such a power…
It might be quite difficult.

"That's one of the reasons Brocken recommended you, Michio."

The Baron nods to himself.
To defeat a labyrinth you must be able to avoid everything.
If it's Roxanne, it's possible.
The Duke recommended me, but he probably did that after seeing Roxanne's movements.

"So if you parry with the sword, it can break it? Is it safe to attack it with a sword?"

Sherry asked.
It seems natural.
There shouldn't be much difference between blocking an attack, and attacking.

"There's no problem if you attack it's body, so you need to aim carefully, or attack with magic. There are a lot of parties that bring a large amount of cheap swords and shield in and consider them disposable."

A strategy where they assume things will be destroyed?
The last boss seems quite troublesome.

"Sorry to have kept you waiting, here's the herbal tea."

As the first part of the talks finishes, Sebastian comes with tea.
The Baron doesn't seem to have made any particular evaluation of me.
Well, I just used a spear and attacked from the back.

Another person comes along behind Sebastian pushing a cart.
Sebastian lifts a tea pot and pours it into cups on the cart, then places them in front of us.
He holds the tea pot quite high.

He pours the tea from such a height without spilling a drop.

He has a refined, flowing movement.
Six cups in total, including the Baron's.
The people guarding don't seem to get any.

"Well then."

Baron Ester indicates that we should drink, and he tastes the herbal tea.
I also drink some.
It's a refreshing herbal tea with a slightly bitter feeling.

"This is delicious."
"Thank you."

Sherry gave her impression, and Sebastian bowed.

"This lodge can be used by anyone that is a member. You'll get a full explanation later. You will require money for eating and drinking, it might be a bit expensive for a common Adventurer, so don't spend too much here."

It seems to be quite an upper class herbal tea.
Who will pay for this?
Since I've joined, is the first drink free?
That's what the regular citizens might think.

"I'll be careful."
"The enrollment ritual will be done in five days. Come back here around noon on that day. For the admission of first rank you just have to come on your own. Your party members are included in enrollment, but they cannot attend the ceremony."
"I understand."

It doesn't seem to have been a bad thing to have enrolled, but there is an initiation ceremony.

Notes

1. Said in first-last order

Chapter 165 - Shop

“All the members in the lodge are comrades. We behave without regard to the official position or the social status. I want you to not forget that. There was a time when his Majesty was a member of the liberation society; however, inside the lodge, he was equal to the rest. Even if the Emperor wanted to become a member but he didn’t have the ability, we would decline. By all means, it is necessary in order for the Empire Liberation Society to remain a force.”

What Baron Ester said is terrifying.
It does not seem to be different from the Baron’s usual attitude.
The Emperor was a member as well, huh?
Even the Emperor would lose membership if he did not have the ability.

From what he said, he seems to no longer be a member.
Was he adjudged to not be capable anymore?
It is better that he is not a member.
For peace of my mind.

If more people joined because of members like the Emperor or the Duke, sooner or later, the Empire Liberation Society would turn apart because of internal strife.
Rules are necessary in order to preserve the power of an organization.
However, in the Emperor’s case, the admission test should be easy.

Nah, will there be equality if that were the case?
It will be impertinent for them to expressly ask to be a member like a commoner.
Equality can be maintained by only admitting those of high official position or social status.
There seem to be various considerations.

“I see.”
“I will contact Brocken myself. It’s admission etiquette to not meet with the referrer within 5 days.”

“Really?”

It doesn’t seem to be necessary for me to go to the Duke and express gratitude.

“It was the same for me. You will receive further explanation from the Secretary. I am counting on you from this point onward, Sebastian.”

The Baron addresses Sebastian.
Is Sebastian a secretary, not a butler?

“Understood.”
“He is the General Secretary, Sebastian. Ask him for the detailed information.”

So it was the General Secretary.
I didn’t think much of it when he said Secretary. However, being General Secretary, he seems to be important.

“Got it.”
“Well then.”

The Baron finishes his cup and stands up.
The Baron pats my shoulder when I was getting up and leaves the room.
Before leaving, the Adventurer from the Baron’s party opened his Item Box and paid to Sebastian.

The Herbal Tea wasn’t free, it seems. It was the Baron’s treat.
Or the Adventurer perhaps only paid the Baron’s share and Sebastian will collect from us later.
Anyways, since he had to open the Item Box, he probably paid in the silver coins.
I am not sure how much since I didn’t see clearly but there seemed to be several coins.

Assuming it is 2 silver coins for 6 cups, it is an affordable price.
It would be an outrageous price if it were only for one cup which the Baron drank.
I might really go bankrupt.
‘This is a rip off bar!’ I should say.

“Then if Michio-sama doesn’t mind, I would like to explain about our lodge.”

The rip off bar master bows his head.
Actually, Sebastian is the General Secretary.

“Please.”
“Could you please come here?”
“Sure.”

I drink the herbal tea left in the cup and stand up.
Because it is expensive, I don’t want to waste it.
Roxanne and the girls also finish drinking the herbal tea and leave their seats.

“This room is available for meetings or socializing with fellow parties. There is another similar room on the second floor. Please order it without any hesitation. You can also order food and drinks any time.”

Sebastien explains while walking.
The room is not charged but the beverages are?
That is why it is expensive, I guess.

That reminds me, the Baron didn’t mention anything about the fees.
There seem to be additional charges since there is no membership fee.

“I will order it when the time comes.”
“This lodge basically is a private facility. There is a door that connects to the outside but it is for supplies and us secretaries’ use. Members can’t use it except for emergency, so enter through the wall in the lobby using [Field Walk」, please.”
“Is that so?”

I already heard from the Baron that this lodge is in the Imperial Capital.
Is it for the members’ exclusive use?
Or is its location in the Imperial Capital kept secret, perhaps?

If it is called the Imperial Capital, it should be vast, no?
The Imperial Capital should be a little vast since it is called the Imperial Capital.

The consumption of MP in case of [Field Walk] and [Warp] changes based on the distance.
I can figure out as to where it is located based on that.

“There is a big assembly room on the second floor and a reference room on the third floor.”

Sebastian shows us around the lodge and explains before the stairs.
The first floor is large in itself and then there still is a third floor?

“Reference room?”
“Yes, Sherry-sama. There are memos and activity logs of various members, and the labyrinth strategy guides left by the members.”
“Can only the official members view them?”

Sherry has really gotten into it.
I understand how much she wants to have a look at them.

“The party members of a member receive the same treatment. If Michio-sama becomes a member and is trusted, it is possible for Sherry-sama to have access to the reference room.”
“I understand.”

The memos and the strategy guides may contain useful information.
It will be good to let Sherry take a look later on.

“The back room there has become a shop.”

Sebastian enters one of the rooms.
Do they sell souvenirs there? Is what I thought but I was wrong.
There are some amours and spears.
Oh right, the Duke did say that equipment can be bought and sold in the Empire Liberation Society.

“Equipment?”
“Yes. Although we don’t have that many, we deal in powerful equipment made of Orichalcum and equipment with skills.”

This spear is indeed an Orichalcum Spear.
Orichalcum Spear must exist for there exists Orichalcum Sword.
I stand in front of the Orichalcum Spear and look at the tip.

“It appears to be a good spear.”
“Here, buying and selling equipment involves points rather than money. When you sell a powerful item or an equipment with skills, you receive appropriate points in accordance with the item. When you buy from the society, you will need to spend points instead of money.”

You buy using the points you earn by selling, huh?
So you will have to sell here before you can buy.

It will probably be useless to sell them a weapon which can be bought from an ordinary weapons shop.
The weapons shop in Quratar didn’t have any Orichalcum weapon for sale.
It has to be a powerful weapon, like the Orichalcum Spear, or a weapon with skills for it to work.

As for me, Sherry can fuse monster cards without failing.
So I can sell equipment with skills.
Then I can buy powerful weapons using the accumulated points.

It is not like I particularly want this Orichalcum Spear.
And it doesn’t have any skill slot either.
However, since I can tell if it is the real thing, I can tell if it has empty slots, too.
I must wait for when they have one for sale.

The problem is, how much will the equipment cost?
Not many equipment are on display.
There is no more than one spear.
Maybe there is not that much supply of Orichalcum Spears.

Even though it is the Empire Liberation Society shop, who would want to sell?
Both the Duke and the Baron have money and they fight on higher floors in the labyrinths, one can guess that there is more demand to buy than the people who want to sell.
This system where you cannot buy unless you sell is really ingenious.

“Does it sell well?”
“If not a service provided by the society, it’s not to the extent to be

called business. As for individual equipment, it may sell immediately but sometimes it may remain unsold for long.”

So it is like this, huh?
I will need to frequently visit and keep an eye, it seems.

There are a few other equipment beside the spear.
The only one available in multiple numbers is the Sacrificial Misanga.
Three Sacrificial Misangas are on display.

“Sacrificial Misanga?”
“You know it well. Sacrificial Misanga is not an equipment that can normally be purchased. It is treated as a consumable item.”
“Is it consumed frequently?”
“As it frequently breaks, we have it in stock since many members buy it. Since consuming it requires points, it is normally procured through Quratar’s auction house unless there is an emergency.”

So there is no need to spend points on something which can be obtained through the auction?
They probably buy it for emergencies since no one knows when it will be exhibited at the auction.
What if it broke and there were no spares?

“True.”
“As for pricing, we receive it at an appropriate price. The price at which we buy here is considerably less than the price it can be sold through the auction.”

Isn’t it better to sell it through the auction then?
Well, that is expected.
I can receive points if I sell here, though.

On the contrary, there may be people selling here after buying at the auction.
There’s a financial loss but they can obtain points.
It is like exchanging money for points.

“I have a spare Sacrificial Misanga. How many points can I get if I sell it?”
“It will give you one point.”

“Can you please tell me how much does a Sacrificial Misanga cost?”
“Around 10,000 Nars.”

That’s awful.
If it were purchased through bidding at the auction and then traded here for points, the required amount of money would increase.
Here, 1 point tends to be equal to 10,000 Nars. Whereas, at the auction, the price can go up to 20,000 Nars.
It is natural for the price at the auction to increase.

Even if there is no such thing as 20,000 Nars Sacrificial Misanga, there are other equipment they deal in here which can go for several tens of thousands of Nars at the auction or even higher.
If I were to sell a 100,000 Nars item at half the price, I would incur a loss of 50,000 Nars.
It is a rip off.

“I wonder if the one from before was an Orichalcum Spear.”
“So you are familiar with it, after all.”
“And the points required to buy the Orichalcum Spear-”
“It requires 3 points.”

So I need to sell three Sacrificial Misangas to buy an equipment made of Orichalcum?
Furthermore, the purchases will have to be covered separately.
It’s quite a chore.

I should resume ordering Caterpillar Monster Cards.
I can even ask right now.
I just have to say that I was careless in the labyrinth and broke my Sacrificial Misanga.

The news may reach the Duke immediately.
It may be a good thing if he gets to know or it may be a bad thing.
It is complicated.

“There seems to be a Large Shield.”

Roxanne points to a shield.

“Large Shield?”
“Is that a Large Shield?”

Vesta cuts in.
Dragonkin are the ones who use Large Shield.

“I saw a person from the dragonkin tribe using a shield of similar size before, so it should be a Large Shield.”

It is a Large Shield according to Roxanne.
It is named Rugged Damascus Steel Large Shield.
I have a Strengthened Hard Leather Hat.
Because I don’t remember using a Kobold Monster Card at that time, this (Rugged) skill seems to be better than the Strengthened skill.

“This is Rugged Damascus Steel Large Shield.”
.
I knew already because of Appraisal. However, does Sebastian know about all the items here?
What a competent man.
I approach it and take a closer look.
I didn’t realize how large it was since it was lying on a rack but it is quite large.

It can easily hide one person.
A physical attack cannot pass through its defense, can it?
What about magic attacks?
Do you blow it off with the shield?

On the other hand, it will be really difficult to hold this.
To be able to hold it in one hand, as you would expect from such cool chuunibyou people as dragonkin.
If it is only about defense, other people than the dragonkin can use it, too, I think.
However, it is incomprehensible to go hunting in the labyrinth and do nothing but defending.

Can a Wizard use it?
If the stick could be replaced with a Large Shield, it would be great.
If I could, I would like to use it.

Can a Priest or a Monk use it, too?
However, isn’t it questionable to reduce your offensive power when

there can only be six people in a party?
And I believe it is difficult swinging it around lightly, when it is this big, in order to deal with the monsters.
Even if you want to temporarily switch to defense, you can simply fall back and be a rearguard.

Or is it possible arranging 4 or 5 shields side-by-side to make a wall like Roman legion's?
Wouldn't it induce monsters from 23th floor onward to use area of effect magic attacks?
And the damage would be rather high.

"Damascus Steel Large Shield?"
"There are many dragonkin amongst our members and their parties, so we deal plenty in Large Shields."

I can obtain Large Shield here, it seems.
As it is now, however, I am not worried about Vesta's defense.
Using two two-handed swords is better, isn't it?

Chapter 166 - Carp

After having received the explanation about the facility, I put the lodge off.
Henceforth, I'll drop by the lodge shop every now and then.
The prospects of earning points look bright.

"Sherry, isn't there a Large Shield that increases magic power?"

While moving to Haruba's labyrinth, I ask tentatively.

"Uh, you can fuse a Goat Monster Card."

Large Shield of Offerings, huh?
I already have an earring with 2x Intelligence skill equipped, so that's not what I meant.
Even if I equip two, it won't turn into 4x.

"Is that the only way?"
"I haven't heard of any other. There's no monster card that can only be fused with a weapon nor a monster card that can only be fused with an armor."
"Is it possible to attach Increase in Attack Power skill to it?"
"You'll have to attack directly with the fused shield, though."

Isn't it useless then?
So, is attaching Increase in Intelligence skill better?
If I were a dragonkin, I could equip both the shield and the stick.
Nah, Increase in Intelligence skills of the two equipment wouldn't stack.

"It seems difficult in not just one way."

With the admission into the Empire Liberation Society settled, we fire ourselves up and explore the labyrinth.
I sweep the Gummi Slimes and the Cyclopes with Intermediate Wind Magic.
Now that Grand Wizard has leveled up, I can take monsters out even quicker. There's no longer any issue on this floor.

The Scissor Lizard, the weakness of which differs from the rest, is somewhat of a nuisance but I leave it to Miria.

Whenever Miria petrifies a monster, I tidy it up with Durandal.
With petrified monsters, MP can safely be recovered.
So I don't have to attack from the front. I safely attack from the sides.
The Scissor Lizard collapses and turns into smoke.

"Yes, desu."

It dropped leather. Miria picks it up and brings it over.
There was no need for me to pick up the item dropped by the monster that I killed with Durandal.
Roxanne and Vesta go and pick up the items dropped by the Cyclopes.
Because the Cyclopes fell before reaching the front due to getting obstructed by the Wind magic, I'm grateful that they went and picked the items up.

"Master, you did it. It dropped a monster card."

Roxanne comes back with the monster card which she picked up.
One of the Cyclopes dropped a monster card, it seems.
I receive the card from Roxanne.
Appraisal is showing it as Cyclops Monster Card, too.

"Cyclops Monster Card?"
"If fused with a weapon or an accessory, it grants Increase in Attack Power skill. If fused together with a Kobold Monster Card, it grants 2x Attack Power skill."

Sherry informs without a moment's delay.
2x Attack Power?
Any increment in attack power is most welcome.

Presently, however, our attack power is sufficient for this floor.
So it's not urgently required.
I mainly fight using magic and Durandal, so there won't be much opportunity for it to come into play.

Should I fuse it with the Sacred Spear or the Earring of Offerings?

But I don’t particularly need it, so it’ll be a waste.

Should I keep the card?
That’ll be a waste, too.
There’s merit in fusing it with an appropriate equipment rather than keeping it.

Even if little, increment in attack power can’t be bad.
Although it’s not currently required, I can still fuse it.
There’s a possibility of selling the fused weapon in the lodge shop.
It can become fertilizer for the next equipment.

If I am to sell it, I can’t fuse it with Sherry’s Incantation Interruption spear.
Nor with Miria’s Estoc of Petrifaction.

“Should I fuse it with the Rapier or the Steel Sword?”

It comes to these two after the process of elimination.
Should I fuse it with the Rapier?
Nothing can go wrong with giving priority to Roxanne.

“I think it should rather be fused with the Steel Sword than the Rapier. It’ll be helpful in the boss battles.”

Roxanne proposes.
Indeed. In the boss battles, I hand Durandal to Vesta who takes care of one of the monsters.
Although I don’t believe that attacking simultaneously with casting spells will make much difference, enhancing the Steel Sword may be better.

If I fuse it with the Steel Sword, I can test whether it stacks with Durandal’s 5x Attack Power skill or not.
After all, it’s not yet known whether Durandal’s 5x Attack Power skill can stack with the Steel Sword or not in case of dual wielding.
Although it’s not impossible to test, it’s incredibly difficult.

“I guess. Let’s attach it to the Steel Sword then.”

If Roxanne says so, let’s go with the Steel Sword.
Since it will be sold later, we can get another one.

In the evening, I have Sherry perform the fusion after finishing with the exploration.

“It’s done.”

Sherry fuses it with ease.
Because it wasn’t the case of multiple skills this time, she was composed.

Steel Sword of Fury | Two-handed Sword
Skills | 2x Attack Power | Empty | Empty

I receive the sword from Sherry and swing it lightly.
So, if you attach 2x Attack Power skill, it becomes Sword of Fury, huh?

“As expected of Sherry. It has become a good sword.”
“Thank you very much.”
“I’ll leave this sword to Vesta.”
“Okay. I didn’t think I would ever be able to use a weapon with skill.”

When I hand it to Vesta, she accepts it with gratitude.
She seems thrilled.
I’m feeling bad now.

“Ah, I have decided to sell this sword later on at the shop we saw this morning. When that time comes-”
“Understood.”

Just in case, I give her a heads up.
Because I’ll buy something else when I sell it at the lodge shop, it’s not that bad.

Michio Kaga | Male | 17 Years Old
Wizard Lv50 | Hero Lv47 | Jobless Lv44 | Grand Wizard Lv37 | Priest Lv43 | Adventurer Lv38
Equipment | Sacred Spear | Hard Leather Hat | Alba | Dragon Leather Gloves | Dragon Leather Boots | Earring of Offerings

Roxanne | Female | 16 Years Old
Shrine Maiden Lv34
Equipment | Rapier | Steel Shield | Wind Resistant Damascus Steel

Forehead Protector | Dragon Leather Jacket | Hard Leather Gloves | Hard Leather Boots of Willow | Sacrificial Misanga

Sherry | Female | 16 Years Old
Master Smith Lv38
Equipment | Steel Spear of Authority | Hard Leather Hat | Chainmail | Water Resistant Leather Mittens | Hard Leather Boots | Sacrificial Misanga

Miria | Female | 15 Years Old
Assassin Lv35
Equipment | Estoc of Petrifaction | Iron Shield | Poison Resistant Hard Leather Hat | Chainmail | Hard Leather Gloves | Hard Leather Boots | Sacrificial Misanga

Vesta | Female | 15 Years Old
Dragon Knight Lv35
Equipment | Steel Sword of Fury | Iron Sword | Strengthened Hard Leather Hat | Platemail | Steel Gauntlets | Steel Demigreaves | Sacrificial Misanga

The next day. With the enhanced weapon, we explore the labyrinth.
There's almost no feeling of it having been enhanced.
Because magic and Durandal are our main force of attack, it can't be helped.
To test the dual wielding with Durandal and the Steel Sword of Fury, we decide to go to the boss room.

The next day. We finally reach the boss room.
As expected, it took more time than in case of 23rd floor.
We didn't encounter any trouble, though, for Grand Wizard has leveled up.

In the boss room, on either sides of the boss appear a Gummi Slime and a Cyclops.
I cast a Wind spell and apply Abnormal Status Resistance Down on the Gummi Slime which Miria was confronting.
Vesta takes out the Cyclops. Miria petrifies the Gummi Slime. The boss ends up petrified, too.

The time Vesta took to finish the monster off was almost the same,

huh?
Stacking Durandal's 5x Attack Power skill with the Steel Sword of Fury's 2x Attack Power skill doesn't seem to result in 10x attack power.
If the overwhelming power of Durandal were doubled, the difference would be distinct.
Like when I invoke Rush to attack.

5x Attack Power skill and 2x Attack Power skill don't seem to stack, after all.
There's a lingering worry. Earlier, paired with the Steel Sword having no skill, Durandal's 5x Attack Power skill was effective. Now that the Steel Sword has 2x Attack Power skill attached, there's a likelihood that it'll precede and be effective instead.
If the fusion resulted in actually having the skill weakened, it would really be embarrassing.

I wonder how it works.
I don't know whether 5x Attack Power skill will be effective with the Steel Sword or not. Even if 2x Attack Power skill will be effective, 5x Attack Power should still activate occasionally, shouldn't it?
Besides, even if it turned 2x from 5x, the bodily sensation wouldn't differ much.
Because Durandal won't be a part of dual wielding except for during the boss battles, the loss isn't to the extent to be called a failure.

"Although the sword has been enhanced, there didn't seem to be any difference, did it?"
"I guess. But master's magic was overwhelming."
"Because it's the attack power of the Steel Sword which has been doubled, the difference wasn't considerable, it seems."
"Yes, desu."
"I think there was no difference."

I ask others for their impression. There was indeed no difference.
I receive Durandal from Vesta and clean up the petrified monsters.

"Sherry, which monster appears on 26th floor?"
"The monster native to Haruba's 26th floor is Cape Carp."
"xxxxxxxxxx"

“It’s carp. C-a-r-p.”

Because of Miria shouting excitedly, I can take a guess. It’s a fish, huh?
Roxanne teaches her the Brahim word.
Because it’s a koi, is that why it’s called carp?

“Carp, desu.”
“Does Cape Carp drop any ingredient?”
“It doesn’t.”

I ask Sherry who denies.
If it dropped sashimi, how cool would that be?
Miria doesn’t seem to be aiming for the ingredient.
She’s excited merely because the enemy is a fish.

“It doesn’t?”
“The ingredient is dropped by High Carp. In this labyrinth, High Carp should appear on 59th floor. If it grows up to 59th floor, that is.”
“How do you know that?”

When a labyrinth grows up to 50th floor, it opens an entrance to invite people in.
Although the entrance of Haruba’s labyrinth had already been discovered, it’s not yet known as to how far it has grown. The labyrinth takes long to grow, so it shouldn’t have grown up to 59th floor.
The Duke’s order of knights does enter in order to kill the labyrinth.
However, how can it be known as to which monster appears on a floor which has yet to be explored?

“Umm, the bosses of the first 33 floors turn into the monsters on the next floors……Didn’t you know that?”

Sherry realizes from my complexion.
I’m sorry that I didn’t know that.
It must be a common knowledge in this world.

I see. So it’s like that, huh?
From 1st floor to 11th, 12th floor to 22nd and 23rd floor to 33rd, monsters appear randomly. However, from 34th floor onward, the

order repeats.
1st floor's boss appears on 34th floor. 2nd floor's boss appears on 35th floor.
The boss of 26th floor should therefore appear on 59th floor.

If you know which monster appears on 26th floor, you can figure out which monster will appear on 59th floor.
There will naturally be a boss of 59th floor. That boss will drop the ingredient.

It's a long way off.
59th floor's boss drop will be really precious.

"The boss of Quratar's 1st floor, Kobold Kempfer, will appear as a monster on 34th floor and 26th floor's boss will appear as a monster on 59th floor?"
"Correct. By the way, the monster native to Quratar's 26th floor happens to be Cape Carp."

Same, huh?
Oh well, it may happen.
There's a probability of 1/11.
So it shouldn't be that rare.

"Hee, really?"

Vesta is nodding.
That the monster on Haruba's 26th floor is same as the monster on Quratar's 26th floor shouldn't be that impressive, should it?
For Vesta wasn't aware either, the fact that the bosses of the first 33 floors turn into the monsters on the next floors shouldn't be common knowledge.
So I have won my case.

"Cape Carp is a monster that's well versed in four attributes of magic, amongst which, it has command over Water magic. It's resistant to Water attribute and weak against Fire attribute, so it's weakness is Fire magic."

It's weakness is Fire magic?
Fire magic is effective against Gummi Slime, too, so I should change

the skill of Jobless to Intermediate Fire Magic.
However, Cyclops is resistant to Fire.
And Cyclops is supposed to appear on 26th floor.

“If Cyclops appears, I’ll leave it to Miria.”
“Okay, desu.”

While moving to 26th floor, I change the skill of Jobless.
We proceed under Roxanne’s guidance and encounter three fish.
It’s Cape Carp.
It’s swimming in the air just like Black Diamond Tuna.

But It’s slightly smaller than Black Diamond Tuna.
It’s still close to 1 meter, though.
However, it’s not entirely black unlike black diamond tuna. A portion of its back is blackish brown.

Because it’s called Cape Carp, I thought there would be a cape around its neck but it doesn’t seem to be the case.
It’s a normal carp.
It’s slightly long and thin, though, just like grass carp.
More importantly, its mouth is pointed like barracuda.

By cape, does it mean the peninsula《cape》, not the mantle one?
There’s a town in the Cape of Good Hope called Cape Town.
There’s Cape Canaveral in Florida Peninsula.
Because its mouth is pointed like a peninsula, is that why it’s called Cape Carp?

Chapter 167 - Ascending the Dragon Gate

I fire a barrage of Fire spells and take the Cape Carps out.
Because Grand Wizard had leveled up, there was no problem finishing them off.
I didn't even care to cast Abnormal Status Resistance Down on Miria's opponent.
We seem to be able to fight on 26th floor just fine.

The collapsed carps turn into smoke, leaving dropped items behind.
Left behind were two livers and a parasitic worm.
Geh
Did it drop a parasite?

"It's liver, right? Isn't it food?"
"If a liver is thrown at a monster, it transforms into a Drive Dragon or so I've heard."

Informs Sherry.
'A carp can evolve into a dragon,' huh?
'If a carp ascends a river called the Dragon Gate, it'll evolve into a dragon' or something like that.
The carp's ascension.

I wonder if the carp in this world evolves into a dragon, too.
There's no use racking brains over it.
It's a monster, after all.
And one that swims in the air, no less.

"When a monster transforms into a dragon, doesn't it become strong?"
"It's used mainly against the bosses and the high-ranked monsters. However, if a monster is strong, it doesn't transform into a Drive Dragon willingly. Therefore, the ease of its use depends on the strength of the monster."

If a boss or a high-ranked monster transforms into a Drive Dragon, does it become weak?
After the Drive Dragon comes the boss dragon after which is the high-ranked dragon.
If they (the bosses and the high-ranked monsters) transformed into a Drive Dragon, they would be weakened, surely.

“So you use it like that, huh?”
“Thereafter, the Drive Dragon has to be killed before its body reverts back.”
“Why does it have to be taken out before its body reverts back?”
“A Drive Dragon leaves dragon skin behind. It’s *puripuri* tender and delicious. It has lovely texture. Also, it’s said that if you add it to the soup, its taste ranks up to 2 or even 1.”

Don’t tell me that the dragon drop is the same as chicken skin!
It’s questionable, though, whether it has the same white skin or not.
Still, its stock seems to make for a delicious soup.
I should try it.

“Yes, desu.”

Miria brings parasitic worm over.
I was totally not anticipating it.
The parasitic worm looks like an earthworm.
It doesn’t seem to be moving. It’s not alive, is it?

I can’t imagine a monster dying and leaving a parasite behind.
In the first place, it’s incomprehensible for a monster to host a parasite.
I wonder if the parasite is a monster, too.
Because Cape Carp is a freshwater fish, is that why it contains parasite?

“Is it alright to hold it in hand?”

I confirm with Sherry.
It shouldn’t penetrate into the body via hand.

“As long as it doesn’t come in contact with the soil, there’s no problem. Whenever it touches the soil, it digs into it. The place it digs

into turns dead. If sown into the fields, it increases the quantity of crops, so it's popular amongst the farmers."

Fertilizer, huh?
So it really is the same insect as earthworm.
It's a useful insect even though it's a parasite.

"If that's the case, then it must be living in the fields from birth."
"Unless it's put in the Item Box, it can't survive for long. There has been no instance of it surviving in the fields for more than ten days."

The growth conditions for a larva likely differ from that of an imago.
It probably grows inside a monster's body and reproduces inside the soil.
In the fields, it turns into an imago. That should be why it's not found after ten days.
The larvae of wasps and moths, found generally in the fields, are probably the parasitic worms.

This creature is a strong one.
On one hand, the labyrinths feed off humans while on the other hand, the parasites feed off monsters.
Frightening.

Actually, the Cape Carp that dropped parasitic worm didn't drop liver.
For a monster drops only one item, the parasitic worm shouldn't be a monster.
Or had the parasitic worm already eaten its liver, perhaps?
Since the liver had already been eaten, the monster couldn't drop it and dropped the parasitic worm instead.

Liver is a part of the monster which it leaves behind after dying. It wouldn't be surprising if the creature that ate it were left behind in its place.
However, if this theory is to hold correct, the Cape Carp that hosts a parasitic worm and is supposed to drop a monster card should drop two items: the monster card and the parasitic worm.
It's a flawless theory even if I say so myself.

"Has there been an instance of a Cape Carp dropping both the

monster card and the parasitic worm?”
“I haven’t heard any such thing.”

Sherry denies.
I seem to be going ahead of time, so my theory has yet to be validated.
It can’t be helped.
Wagner and Copernicus weren’t understood in their respective times, either.

After receiving the parasitic worm from Miria, I put it in my Item Box.
Huh? Since the parasitic worm can be put inside the Item Box, it should be a dropped item, shouldn’t it?
Only the equipment and the items dropped by the monsters can be put in the Item Box.

So, is my theory flawed?
Oh well, it can’t be helped.
We are talking about monsters, after all.

Thereafter, we explore 26th floor.
We seem to be able to fight on 26th floor, too.
We received an area of effect magic attack but there was no issue for we have two people, including Roxanne, able to heal.

The Cape Carp used area of effect water, which it has command over, and wind magic attacks.
Even though it has command over an attribute, it doesn’t mean it has to be highly powerful.
There wasn’t much difference between the damage inflicted by its Wind magic and Gummi Slime’s Earth magic.
It seems to be good at using magic which it has command over.

Although I have yet to bathe it in Fire, which it’s weak against, and Earth magic, there’ll surely be not much difference.
So I’m sure it’ll be difficult to exploit its weak point.
I have yet to do it.

The items dropped by the Cape Carps were livers.
However, the parasitic worm can’t be said to be a rare drop.
Because a freshwater fish tends to be parasitic.

After leaving the labyrinth, I discuss how to use the livers while having the breakfast.

“In any case, I have to use one liver to see how a monster transforms into a Drive Dragon.”

There may be a job associated with transforming a monster into a Drive Dragon.
Or I may acquire Dragon Slayer after slaying a dragon.
I’m so *wakuwaku* thrilled.

“Yes, we should try fighting, I guess.”
“Since Drive Dragon appears onward from 23rd floor, it shouldn’t be an opponent we can’t defeat.”
“Do, desu.”
“I think it’ll be alright.”

This time, my main objective is to use the liver, not to fight a dragon.
The battle will only be a consequence.
These fellows are excessively aggressive.

“Should I make a Cape Carp a dragon? No, should I make a monster of a lower floor a dragon? Or should I make a monster outside the labyrinth a dragon?”

I would prefer not to make a Lv26 Cape Carp a dragon.
Because I have a choice, I would like try it on a Lv1 monster.
Also, I have no idea as to what will the level of the Drive Dragon be.

There’s another option which is to try it on a monster petrified by Miria but it may fail to take effect on a petrified monster.
It will be a waste of a liver.
Also, if it succeeds and consequently cancels petrifaction, it will be embarrassing.

“It’s said that the size of the Drive Dragons inside the labyrinth differs from the size of the Drive Dragons that rush out of the labyrinth. We should first try to transform a monster inside the labyrinth into a Drive Dragon.”

Suggests Sherry.
Do they differ in size?

Because it's not spacious inside the labyrinth, the size will be limited even if it's a dragon.
A tens of meters long Drive Dragon won't be able to fit inside the labyrinth.

If it became bigger upon going out, it'd be troublesome.
As Sherry suggested, I should try to transform a monster inside the labyrinth into a Drive Dragon.

"Is the monster of 1st floor of the labyrinth safe then?"
"Drive Dragons are the strongest of the monsters that appear from 23rd floor up to 33rd floor. Therefore, we should try it on a monster of 1st floor. Weak monsters give up easily, increasing the likelihood of it succeeding. If it's the monster of 1st floor, Kobold, it should readily transform into a Drive Dragon."
"It's killing two birds with one stone. Because Quratar is crowded, we can't try it there."
"Drive Dragon appears on Quratar's 33rd floor. However, it's said that it's stronger than 34th floor's Kobold Kempfer."

It's stronger than the boss of 1st floor.
Conversely speaking, it's only slightly stronger than the boss of 1st floor.
If it's the current us, we can do it.

Having collected plenty of livers after hunting early morning, we move to Haruba's 1st floor after the breakfast.
The monster native to Haruba's 1st floor is Naive Olive.

"I'll throw the liver. Until it transforms into Drive Dragon, Miria will hold back from attacking it."
"Okay, desu."
"Drive Dragon tends to charge, so it's safer to attack it from the back and the sides. Also, it uses magic of all four attributes and is resistant to all four attributes. Since it's not weak against any attribute, it's better to attack it with Lightning magic."

You should tell me such things earlier, Sherry!
Had you told me during the breakfast, I would have set it to Basic Lightning Magic. After the admission test, I had set it back to Intermediate Fire Magic.

Oh well. Because I haven't told her, amongst many other things, that setting the skill of Jobless has a cooldown period, it can't be helped.
I can only submit.
Sherry might even have noticed already. Weren't there such situations?

Appraisal, multiple jobs, Character Reset; all of it is connected. If any of it comes out, all of it will unravel.
Even if I told Roxanne and the girls, I would only be burdening them unnecessarily.
When I take it with me to my grave, it will all end with that.

In any case, I will just have to use Durandal and nothing of it will matter.
It's all for a new job: Dragon Slayer.
I pull Durandal out and proceed under Roxanne's guidance.

A Naive Olive appears and approaches us, trotting.
I close in to a distance where it won't be able to dodge and throw a liver.
When the liver hits the Naive Olive, it turns into smoke and starts shapeshifting.
When the shape resembled that of a dragon, the smoke turns back into a monster.

Is this the transformation process?
A monster, green just like the Naive Olive, appears.
It's Drive Dragon Lv1.
A creature resembling snake, possessing wings, four limbs and large talons: dragon.

I wonder if it's about 3 meters long.
It's quite huge.
It's normal for it to be frightening.
It's dreadful.

The Drive Dragon floats up in the air.
Opens its mouths, bares its fangs.
And plunges into Roxanne who was standing in the front.

Roxanne lowers the upper half of her body and dodges it.

As expected of Roxanne. She observed it composedly and magnificently dodged it. Immediately after, the talons of its forelimb came stabbing at Roxanne from the side.
Did she dodge that, too?

The dragon regains its posture and charges again.
This time around, Roxanne only tilts her neck to dodge it.
Unlike last time, the dragon's head didn't come out this time.
No sooner than its forelimb lunges in, Roxanne wards it off with her shield.

Blocking the talons with the shield must hurt.
If that's all there is to it, we can take this monster out.
There will be no problem if I leave the front to Roxanne.
I go around to the side and attack it from the safe zone.

It doesn't collapse in one swing of Durandal.
Its endurance seems to be that of a Drive Dragon rather a Naive Olive's.
Trying it on a Lv1 monster was the right decision.

I slash from the side once more.
At the same time, the Drive Dragon stops moving.
Miria's attack from the other side seems to have paralyzed it.
Availing the chance, I hammer in Durandal consecutively.

The dragon collapses.
It's huge. If someone were standing under, it would be troublesome.
However, it was paralyzed this time, so there was no problem.

It took some time.
It seems to be as strong as the boss, indeed.
The Drive Dragon turns into smoke and dissipates.
Leaving dragon skin behind.

The dragon skin looks just like chicken skin.
There are whitish grains.
They can't be pores, can they?
Because it's dragon skin, they must be scales.

"Yes, desu."

Miria picks it up.
Oh no.
I should be the one picking it up, shouldn't I?
I open Party Job Settings interface. Neither Miria nor I have acquired any new job.

No job seems to be associated with transforming a monster into Drive Dragon using a liver, slaying a dragon or picking up dragon skin.
The ascension has failed.
There's a possibility that other conditions haven't been met yet.
It shouldn't be necessary for Roxanne and the girls to do it, too, should it?

"If I made dragon skin soup tonight, would you like whole fish and dragon skin soup for tomorrow's dinner?"
"Do, desu."

When I ask while receiving the dragon skin, Miria immediately snatches it back.
Does that 'do' mean she'll 'do' the cooking?
Or 'do' the dragon in? I'd rather it's not the latter.

Chapter 168 - Dragon Skin

“Then Roxanne is next, I guess. Since I will be taking on the monsters from the front, I will give you two livers.”
“Okay.”

We continue to hunt dragons.
I hand Roxanne the livers and have her lead the way.
The reason as to why I handed her two is if she fails.
If I take on the monsters from the front, it will be hard for me to get them from my Item Box.

Because Roxanne will now be throwing the liver, someone will have have to take care of the monsters from the front in her stead.
I can always excuse myself from having to face the monsters in the name of the duty of using the Item Box for the livers; however, I will feel bad if I avoid fighting, I think.
I believe it is better to fight at least once.
I will have the chance to fight Lv1 Drive Dragon, after all.

Cyclops is quite scary. The power of its blow may not lose to even Rtoll Troll. However, I am really afraid of the dragon.
That gigantic body, those huge talons growing on its limbs, those large fangs baring through its mouth; quite intense.
Rather than facing it for the first time on higher floors, I should experience it here.

If we suddenly found ourselves surrounded by multiple Drive Dragons on higher floors, it would most likely cause panic.
In order to recover my MP, I bring out Durandal and go to the front to fight the monsters.
I should warm up by fighting a Lv1 monster.

I run and close in on the Naive Olive as soon as it appears.
I outrun Roxanne and confront the monster.
I should not have to be afraid of a mere Naive Olive Lv1.
However, I should not have to be proud either.

While I was watching the monster's movement without being careless, Roxanne throws a liver from the side.
The Naive Olive turns into smoke and the smoke shapeshifts into a dragon's silhouette.
Looks like a success.

I can perhaps switch with Roxanne in the front while it is in the midst of transformation but let's not do that.
Everyone surrounds it.
If we could go into our usual battle formation, the victory pattern would follow.
If I wasn't the one in the front.

The smoke turns into a Dive Dragon.
Before it started to move, I attack it.
Even though I swang Durandal first, the dragon counters with a charge.

I stagger to the left with a loud thud and somehow manage to evade.
Just barely.
The dragon recovers the upper half of its body.
While holding Durandal, I regain my stance and confront the dragon.

There is no gap.
There is no gap for me to launch a second attack.
I will receive the counter if I attack carelessly.

While keeping an eye on the dragon, I weigh the timing of my attack.
In any case, it will not start unless I attack.
I have no choice but to attack.
While I was starting to attack with Durandal, my eyes meet with the Drive Dragon's.

It is glaring at me.
Its glare seals my movement.
If it went on, I would be done in by the counter.
I would not be been able to dive far.

Cold sweat runs down my back.
The time is passing excruciatingly slowly.

The dragon open its mouth and bares its fangs.
Is this the other side's time to attack?

Come.
I gather power in my legs so I can move any time.
Left? Right?

Or so I thought but it doesn't attack.
Huh?
Paralyzed!
Miria seems to have inflicted it with paralysis.

We have got this if it can't move.
I strike it with Durandal.
While it was paralyzed, I exterminate the dragon with continuous strikes.
If the dragon can't move, it is like a training dummy.

However, I will seemingly have a hard time recovering MP with Durandal in this manner on the higher floors.
That I got to realize this, I am glad I went ahead with fighting.
Because it dropped at my feet, I quickly pick up the dragon skin.

I have not acquired any job by picking up the dragon skin.
Is there really no job that can be acquired by picking up dragon skin?
Roxanne have not acquired any new job either.

"Pass the remaining liver to Sherry. Sherry, you will be next."
"Okay."

This time, I hand a liver to sherry and have her transform a monster into a Drive Dragon.
Roxanne is taking on the dragon from the front.
I am able to easily attack the dragon from the side.

While avoiding the dragon's attacks, Roxanne is occasionally thrusting her Rapier into it.
Does successfully attacking it makes it pull back?
It is impossible for me.

As expected, Sherry has not acquired any job.
Is there really no job related to dragons?

If there is, should it not be for a dragonkin like Vesta?
If that were the case, it would be a job specific to the dragonkin. It could be different, though.

“Everyone will get to try it. Next will be Miria. And I will have you use this, Vesta.”
“Okay, desu.”
“Okay.”

I hand Durandal to Vesta.
Miria throws the liver and Vesta slays the dragon.
Neither Miria nor Vesta have acquired a new job, so I can conclude that there is no job related to dragons.

Still, I have Vesta throw a liver regardless.
Best to have everyone try it since we are already here.
Vesta throws a liver and the Naive Olive transforms to a Drive Dragon.

All the members have managed to turn a monster into a dragon at first attempt.
Transforming a Naive Olive Lv1 to a Drive Dragon seems to be easy.
It will be 100% success if it is Kabold Lv1, it seems. If it were not this much, it would be difficult to weaken a high ranked monster by transforming it to a Drive Dragon.

“Did it, desu.”

Miria petrifies the Drive Dragon which Vesta transformed.
Now that I think about it, is it possible that Abnormal Status Rate Up of Miria’s Assassin is effective in transforming a monster to a dragon?
Provided that transforming a monster to a dragon is considered abnormal status.
Or is it not like this, after all?

“Since there is a chance, would you like to try killing it?”
“Yes.”

I pass Durandal to Roxanne and let her kill the petrified Drive Dragon.

There doesn't seem to be any job related to dragons but we try one last time just to be sure.
Nobody has acquired any new job.
As conjectured, there is no job related to dragons.

After receiving just the dragon skins, we move back to 26th floor.
Thereafter, we start exploring 26th floor.
I take out Cape Carps and Gumi Slimes with Fire magic.
Fire resistance of Cyclops and Scissor Lizard is troublesome. Since it is 26th floor, one or two will surely appear. However, Miria will be able to neutralize them if the battle prolongs.

There is nothing to be concerned about in case of a group of two Cape Carps, though.
Against a barrage of 2 [Burn Storm]s and 1 [Fire Storm」, they are not much of an enemy.

"Here it comes."

While I was casting the barrage of three spells for a second time, Roxanne issues warning.
One of the Cape Carps has a red magic formation under it.
While the sparks of my Fire magic were dancing, it adds more fire.
In an instant, my body heats up, causing a tightening shock.

It is an area of effect Fire magic!
This is the first time I have received a Cape Carp's Fire magic attack.
It felt hot for a moment but didn't seem to contain much power.
There would be more damage if it were Earth, Wind or Water magic, I think.

Was it offset by my Fire magic?
However, if they did offset each other and I received damage, it would mean that my barrage of three spells was negated.
So it shouldn't have been the case, right?

The two Cape Carps collapse after receiving usual number of spells.
So they did not offset, after all, huh?

"Didn't the Cape Carp's Fire magic inflict less damage than its Water

magic?”

I try to hear everyone’s opinion.

“I think so. It might have been less.”
“I don’t think it was much different from Water magic.”

Ah. Both Roxanne and Sherry have equipment with Water Resistance.
However, since Roxanne’s has Fire Resistance as well, she can probably compare the two.
I wonder if it can be relied on, though.

“Really?”
“There is no record stating that Cape Carp possesses weak Fire magic. However, it doesn’t seem to use it much. It is very difficult to accurately determine; that may be the reason why there is no record.”

Since there is no other way to confirm whether its Fire magic is weak or not than by getting hit, they could not confirm it.
If Sherry could not find any related information in the books, it cannot be helped.

Although Cape Carp possesses a lot of magic skills, it mostly uses Water magic.
This was the first time it used Fire magic, so it seems to be quite rare.
It will be hard to determine if it is not frequent.
However, if its power really were less, I’d rather it used it more often.

“Weak, desu.”
“I think neither Water nor Fire magic were that strong.”

Only Miria’s opinion should be reliable, no?
According to Vesta-kun, not just Fire, Water magic was weak, too.
However, if Miria feels the power was less, then it really is less powerful than the other attributes.

Then does that mean the attribute which Cape Carp is poor at will do less damage?

Water magic, which it has command on, is not strong to begin with, so Fire magic, which it is poor at, seems to be useless.
Its weakness is Fire magic, after all, so it may be true.

Thereafter, we finish exploration for the day without receiving any further Fire magic.
For the dinner, Roxanne prepares pot-au-feu of the dragon skin.
I look forward to tasting the ingredient I have never tasted before.

“This- how do I put it? It is-”
“What is it?”

It is chicken skin.
However, it really is delicious.
The dragon skin tastes almost like chicken skin.

A nonpareil chicken skin, it can be said.
I have never had a nonpareil chicken skin before.
It is tender and soft. When I bite it, the mellow fat spreads on my tongue.
It is not as sweet as honey but it does taste sweet.

“It tastes as a dragon should, doesn’t it?”
“Yes, it is delicious.”

If it is good, I will say it is good. Also, I cannot bad mouth something which Roxanne made.
So I will praise it in any case.

“The soup is thick and rich.”
“It feels so.”

I wonder if it left stock in the soup.
Although it is merely boiled, it is more delicious than any pot-au-feu I have ever had.

“It really was true that it improves the soup.”
“Tomorrow, desu.”
“I think it is delicious.”

Miria’s interest seems to have shifted toward the whole fish and the dragon skin we will be having tomorrow.

It will be a stock with dragon skin removed, and chicken skin and bones added.
Speaking of chicken bones, it is regrettable to discard them but there is nothing to gain from keeping them either. Speaking of which, Yang Xiu, Cao Cao's advisor, arranged for evacuation from the battlefield because there was nothing to gain from it. Later on, he was executed. It's quite famous. For this reason, no one discards dragon skin.

However, I am unable to verify the skin beautifying effect of the dragon skin.
I fondle them in the moist bath in order to examine.
After the bath, I even lick them clean before groping them in the bed.
Everyone's skin is as smooth, tender and soft as always.

Even without the skin beautifying effect, the skin of the four girls is beautiful.
Glossy, so supple, so very tender; the best.

In the first place, it may take a few days for the effect on the skin to be apparent.
From now on, I must continue examining everyday.
To be specific, I need to fondle them and lick them clean. I will have to examine them thoroughly.
Since it is for science, it can't be helped.

The next morning. We grab the map and enter Quratar's labyrinth.

"The Black Frog boss is called Fluke Frog. The attributes it is resistant to and weak against are the same as Black Frog. It is not that strong despite being a boss; however, it occasionally deals heavy blow. Many people have died because they underestimated it; therefore, please be very careful."

Sherry urges us to be careful.
It seems to be a monster that relies on fluke.
I brace myself and proceed to the boss battle.

If there is no fluke, it does not seem to be a strong monster.
We take it out with ease.
Mainly thanks to Miria.

Miria petrified the Tur Turtle in a blink of an eye and then made the Fluke Frog out of order with the first strike.
It was paralysis, though, not petrifaction. However, she managed to inflict petrifaction before it could start moving again.
Even though I helped with Abnormal Status Resistance Down, it was great nonetheless.

Inflicting abnormal status is Miria's ability.
It was not merely a chance (fluke).

"It was easy to defeat it thanks to Miria. Great as always."
"Go up, desu."

The monster on Quratar's 26th floor is the same as Haruba's; Cape Carp, that is.
Is that why she is excited?
It does not seem to be because of working hard at inflicting petrifaction.

If it is about Cape Carp, it appears in Haruba, too.
Nah, is she telling me to go back to Haruba as soon as possible?
As per Miria's demand, we will go back to Haruba after fighting on 26th floor once.
Quratar's 26th floor mainly has Cape Carps and Black Frogs, that are weak against Fire, so there should not be any problem.

Moreover, there was no particular change in the four's skin that night, too.
There was no change even in Miria's case who had a lot of whole fish and dragon skin soup for herself.
As smooth and beautiful as always.
I am pretty sure for I examined her while playing with her cat-ears.

It was same for the other three as well.
There was no change on the following day either.
To begin with, I can't imagine their skin getting any more beautiful than it already is.
The skin beautifying effect of dragon skin is really dubious.

Chapter 169 - Liberty

"Because tomorrow will be the initiation ceremony at the Empire Liberation Society, we will only be going to the labyrinth early morning after which we will be having the rest of the day off."

During the dinner, I announce tomorrow's schedule.
I heard from Baron Ester that the appointed day for the admission courtesy would be tomorrow.
The admission courtesy doesn't require anyone but me to be present, so it's better for the four of them to take a day off.

"Thank you very much. A day off, huh?"
"That's right. What do you want to do, Roxanne?"
"What do I want to do……"
"What's this 'day off'?"

When Roxanne was brooding over it, Vesta asks.
Which reminds me, it was my first holiday when Vesta joined us.

"Tomorrow, we will be going to the labyrinth before the breakfast after which you'll be able to spend your time freely."
"Such a thing. Is it alright?"
"It's necessary to refresh yourself every once in while."
"Thank you very much."

Vesta bows.

"Although it'll only be half a day, please do whatever you like to do."
"What I like to do?"

Following Roxanne, Vesta pulls a contemplating face, too.
After learning of the day off all of a sudden, she seems to have gotten confused.
Unlike two certain someones.

"As for Sherry, it must be the library or the liberation society's reference room, right?"
"Yes. It's rare, so I would like to go to the reference room, I think."

“And Miria will be fishing?”
“Yes, desu.”

I didn’t even need to hear from these two.
Miria’s face is gleaming already.
She seems to have started fishing right away.

“I will be spending some time shopping and rest of the time leisurely at home, I think. To be honest, though, I would like to go the labyrinth.”

In a way, Roxanne is the same as them, huh? That she wants to do the usual.
Even though it’s a day off, Roxanne wants to spend the time in the labyrinth.
Having rest is better than spending the day off in the labyrinth, isn’t it?

“The initiation ceremony will be around noon, so it’ll be possible for us to go to the labyrinth together in the morning for a bit.”
“Really?”
“Yeah. Do you want to partake in boss hunting? If it’s Roxanne and me, we should be able to go to a somewhat higher floor.”

On 22nd floor or below, only two monsters appear in the boss room.
While Roxanne takes on one, I can finish off the other.
There’s another option; borrowing the Estoc of Petrifaction from Miria, that is.

I’ll be using Durandal, of course.
Even though Roxanne’s objective is to train.
From the standpoint of experience points, I should better use magic and not bring Durandal out but there’s no need to be fixated over it.
I won’t be able to earn that many experience points anyway.

“Black Diamond Tuna, desu.”
“Black Diamond Tuna should be on Haruba’s 22nd floor but I’m not sure if we will be going that far. Quratar’s 17th floor should do.”

Suggests Miria but I’m not sure if we should take on Black Diamond Tuna.

In the boss room, there'll only be two monsters. However, outside the boss room, we will have to take on a large number of monsters.
22nd floor may be a far cry for two people.

It'll be foolish to Warp directly to the boss room or the waiting room.
And I'm not even sure if I can do it for I haven't tried it yet.
So we will have to walk to the boss room from a nearby small room on the floor.

With Roxanne, we can avoid the monsters on the way. However, there'll be situations where we won't be able to avoid confrontation.
Because there'll be two of us, I don't want to go to an excessively high floor.

"Quratar's 17th floor should be better for training, I guess."
"If we chance upon a lean tuna or a fatty tuna, I'll gift it to you."
"Nn. Fishing…… Nn. Black Diamond Tuna……"

Miria looks troubled.
Even though I said that I would gift it to her, she didn't seem to hear it.
If we decide in favor of Black Diamond Tuna, will Miria be tagging along?
Does she rate a fish monster higher than a day off?

Currently, the Cape Carp floor is still unexplored. However, isn't there a difference between entering the labyrinth and taking a day off?
Isn't there a big difference?
However, Cape Carp doesn't drop any ingredient.

There's a pleasure in catching an ingredient by one's own hands.
Isn't watching a seine catch fish frustrating?
It'll be dangerous if it's a monster, though.

"Miria, how about you come with us?"
"You won't be able to go fishing before the sunrise anyway, so how about you enter the labyrinth for a while and go afterward?"
"Go, desu."

Upon my and Roxanne's suggestion, Miria decides to join in.

It’s kinda sad to explore the labyrinth on a day off, though.
Oh well. Since they want to do it of their own will, what can I do?

Vesta is the only one left.
She tilts her head.
She has yet to decide, it seems.

“Vesta, isn’t there a place you want to visit?”
“A place I want to visit?”
“Like a place you wanted to visit in the past but you couldn’t?”
“If there were, I would have visited in the past. No, there’s no such place.”

Vesta declines my suggestion.
How come?
If you don’t want to visit, that’s fine but there’s always a place one wants to visit.

Ah, right.
Like my late grand father’s house.
I always wanted to go there but I can’t go now. Rather, I don’t know where to go.

“Ah, did I make you recall unpleasant memories?”
“No, not at all.”
“There was a place I wanted to visit in the past, but.”
“Umm, it’s alright, really. I don’t want to go there now.”

I’m a little curious now but she says it’s alright.
So I can’t delve too deep.

“Is it perhaps Stella?”

Although I intended to withdraw, Sherry cuts in.
She read the mood.

“It is, indeed, but I don’t want to go there now.”

However, Vesta shakes her hands and declines.

“Stella?”
“There’s a temple in Stella that buys slaves. If you have enough

money, you can buy your freedom by yourself. However, if you don't have money, you can take refuge in the temple. They will buy you through the donations from others."

Explains Sherry.
I see. So there is such a place, huh?
Like a sacred shelter from the middle age called asylum.
It seems to be a refuge temple.

"Therefore, there's no need now."

Vesta declines, flurried.
So, if she said she would like to go to Stella, it would mean she wanted to be freed from me?
In the past, when she became a slave, she wanted to go to Stella.

If one goes to Stella, they can be freed from slavery.
Actually, won't their status be that of the temple's slave?
One benefit of such an arrangement is tax.

"I don't believe you'll run away, so don't worry."
"Yes, I'm grateful that I was purchased by such a kind master. I would like to work for you all my life."
"Please don't."

Thus far, I let everyone do as they please on their day off. It's fine, isn't it?
Sherry should be conscious of the reason, at least.

Even if you run away but you don't have a way of earning money, it's futile.
Even if you successfully escape but you don't have a way of gaining freedom, you'll revert from a slave to a thief.
If it's Roxanne, she can enter the labyrinth.
But I can't imagine Roxanne running away.

Sherry can somehow manage, too, being a Master Smith.
However, if she planned on escaping, she wouldn't tell me about Stella.

"I-I think I would like to go to the labyrinth, too."
"No, it would serve no purpose if all us of went together. Vesta, you

should rest. Or you can tour Quratar or the Imperial Capital."
"Then you rest at home in Quratar. Later, in the afternoon, let's go to the Imperial Capital together."

Roxanne suggests Vesta.

"Yes, I think I'll do just that."

With Vesta agreeing, everyone now has their plan set.
For the time being, I don't have anything in particular for Vesta to do.
I will find something soon.

The next day. It's hot right from the morning.
It may be the hottest day this year.
Over the buckets surrounding the bed, there was not the slightest of cold air. All the ice had already melted.

I'd rather spend such a day entirely inside the labyrinth which doesn't tend to be hot.
Even if I complain, nothing can be done about it.
After entering the labyrinth early morning, buying bread and miscellaneous ingredients, I return home.
Even though it's not that late in the morning, the sun is shining hard on the town of Quratar.

"It's so hot today."
"Yes. I have already instructed Miria, so it's alright."

If she went fishing on such a hot day, she would definitely try to jump into the water.
Roxanne seems to be well aware of Miria's behaviour.
By the way, the concept of bathing in the sea doesn't seem to exist in this world.
Besides, there's a risk of monsters appearing.

"Since I'll be away, I'll give you guys some money. I'll hand out a bit more this time — 10 silver coins."

I hand money to everyone after the breakfast.
The lodge, where Sherry will be going to, is expensive, so she needs more allowance.
Since it won't be appropriate to increase just Roxanne's and Sherry's

allowance, I increase everyone's equally.

"Thank you very much."

When I hand 10 silver coins to Roxanne first, she receives with pleasure.
The order is inviolable.

"Roxanne buys something for others all the time. This time, you should buy something for yourself."
"Okay."

Although I handed out equally, there doesn't seem to be any dissatisfaction.

"The lodge seems to be expensive, so it may not be enough, Sherry."
"Thank you very much. It's alright."

Sherry puts the silver coins away in her Item Box.
Since Master Smith's Item Box can hold ten of the same item, it'll take only one row.
In any case, I'm going to the lodge, too, in relation to the admission courtesy.
If something comes up, I'll manage it.

"Please use this money to cover for fishing tackle and other necessities. After we leave the labyrinth, I'll take you to the fishing tackles shop."
"Yes, desu. Thank you, desu."

Strictly speaking, I should be paying for the fishing tackle myself for I will be eating the fish Miria catches, too.
But Miria isn't demanding that.
I'll buy her a new fishing rod soon.

"Vesta will be getting, too. Please use it freely."
"It's so much. Is it really alright?"
"Use it as you like."
"Thank you very much. It's my first time holding so much money."

An owner has to provide for their slave's food, clothing and shelter.

So there shouldn't have been an opportunity for Vesta to carry money.

"Well then, I'll first take Sherry to the lodge. Sherry?"
"Excuse me. Can you please wait a moment?"

Sherry vanishes into another room.
Judging from the situation, she seems to be preparing the papyrus and the writing instrument.
She purchased those with her allowance.
She didn't flush all her money in the drinks.

"Vesta, if you want to leave right now, I can drop you at the Adventurer's Guild."
"No, it's alright. I'll go there on foot."

Vesta intends to walk to there.
Now that I think about it, I always use Warp between the Adventurer's Guild and home.
I wonder if she knows the way.
Because it's a straight road, it should be alright, no?

"I kept you waiting."
"Let's go then?"
"Please take care."

After Sherry returns, the three of them see us off.
In the lodge, we meet Sebastian right away.

"You- Michio-sama, Sherry-sama, welcome."

The angle he bows his head to is too deep.
He seems to remember our names. Or is it perhaps because I was supposed to come here today?

"I would like Sherry to use the reference room. Is it alright?"
"Certainly. For I have to call the person in charge, please wait a moment."

Sebastian gestures a man. The man leaves in quick strides.
Although he's not running, he's pretty quick.
He disappears in no time.

“Do we need something?”
“Not at all, nothing in particular. If you need parchment, writing implement or meal, just order it; I’ll have it arranged right away.”

I have parchment with me.
Are 10 silver coins enough then?

“But we brought writing implement.”
“If you have one, that’s better. Do use it, please.”

Upon Sherry’s enquiry, he gives a ‘carry on’ kind of ‘OK’.
He’s honest.

The man, who left earlier, brings a woman along.
He really is quick.
As for the woman, she’s trotting.

“Sherry-sama here wants to use the reference room. Guide her.”

Sebastian orders the woman.
The woman bows to Sherry.

“Certainly. Then Sherry-sama, this way, please.”
“If you need me for something, just call for me.”
“Okay.”

I see Sherry off.
The woman turns around and leads.
Sherry follows behind her.

“Because today is the admission courtesy, I’ll be back later.”
“Very well. We’ll be waiting for you.”

I give Sebastian a heads up and return home.
Since we are a party, Sherry will be aware of my direction even if we separate.
The lodge is supposed to be private. Can’t its location be figured out this way?

Chapter 170 - The Emperor

From the lodge, I Warp to the living room of the house.
When I return home, Miria had the fishing gear lying on the table.
She doesn't seem to be negligent in respect of preparations.

"Does it seem to be usable?"
"Yes, desu."

Oh well. It's not like it was kept unused for long.
It's not something which will become unusable in such a short period of time.
Roxanne is sitting relaxedly next to Miria. Vesta can't be seen; she seems to have left.

"Has Vesta gone already?"
"Yes. I had her keep the key. Will we be returning home by noon? Or should I have told her to meet up at the Adventurer's Guild?"
"It's fine."

Because we are a party, meeting up won't pose any difficulty.
That it allows you to track the direction of the party members is really convenient.
Its function is to allow a party to reunite if they separate in the labyrinth.
Such a thing hasn't happened thus far. Is there a possibility of it happening in the future?

Leaving the fishing gear at home, the three of us — Roxanne, Miria and I — enter the labyrinth.
Quratar's 17th floor.
I have worked together with Roxanne, Sherry and Miria, these three, as a vanguard, so there shouldn't be any problem.

"Then let's head to the boss room."
"Please avoid places with numerous monsters as much as possible. It would be better if we focused on the boss battle."

I justify the instruction of avoiding the monsters on the way.

Or did I make it more obvious instead?
Like a cowardly worm clinging, afraid of being caught.

“Understood.”

Roxanne has seemingly gotten it.
She leads the way.

Even if we come across five monsters, us three can take care of them without any issue. However, there’s a possibility of us receiving attacks.
More like I than us.
Therefore, places with numerous monsters must be avoided.

Avoiding the monsters and hunting the boss?
Is there such a thing even possible?

We advance while kicking the monsters on the way about.
With the three of us, there’s no problem.
For we intend to retry the boss battle, there would come a time when we would be unable to find a way around if we kept avoiding the monsters, allowing them to crowd.

By the way, unlike usual, I finish the monsters petrified by Miria with magic.
Since I’m fighting mainly with Durandal, I don’t need to recover MP.
For this reason, I have removed Grand Wizard and Jobless.
With the basic magic of Wizard, which I kept as First Job, I take what was left of the monsters out.

When I go to the initiation ceremony, I’ll switch the First Job to Adventurer.
They may verify my Intelligence Card.

As the Black Diamond Tuna didn’t get petrified, I finish it off with Durandal.
So, is the effect of Abnormal Status Resistance Down, which I always use during the boss battles, that great?
Perhaps because I didn’t cast Abnormal Status Resistance Down, the boss didn’t get petrified until I took it out.
While glancing sideways at Roxanne, who was taking on the tuna

from the front and lightly dodging its attacks, and Miria, who was attacking from diagonally behind the boss, I tidied the accompanying monster up.

What part of it was training?
Even the boss couldn't make for Roxanne's practice.
It was rather stress release.
If it weren't for that, I wouldn't come here on my day off, would I?

The first boss drops lean tuna.
I had already selected Cook for the sake of dropped items.
This isn't a boss that requires us to give our all, so there's no need for Gambler.

"Lean tuna, desu."

Miria looks delighted with lean tuna.
She's learning Brahim properly, huh?

"We'll be having fish sanmai for tonight's dinner. I'll be using this lean tuna. Whether it'll be a fish sanmai or not depends on our catch."
"Master's dishes are always delicious, so I look forward to it."
"Catch, desu."

Putting the lean tuna in the Item Box, we take second round.
Miria petrifies the second boss.
Even without Abnormal Status Resistance Down, the boss can be petrified satisfactorily.
The boss drops lean tuna.

Third boss neither gets petrified nor drops fatty tuna.
Fourth boss doesn't get petrified but drops fatty tuna.
Petrifying the boss seems to be difficult.

"How about having fatty tuna for the dinner the day after tomorrow?"
"Day after tomorrow, desu."

Miria accepts my proposal.
We'll be having fish soup tonight.
So she has no complaints in regard to the day after tomorrow.

Until we secured four fatty tunas, we stay in the labyrinth.

Since two fish suffice for one meal, we have enough for two meals.
For we have plenty for the day after tomorrow and another day, it's enough.
If it's kept inside the Item Box, it won't rot.

"Although it may be early, should we leave it at that?"
"Understood."
"Okay, desu."

Miria shouldn't be dissatisfied, right?
For she'll be able to go fishing now.

"What do you want to do, Roxanne? Do you want to go to the Imperial Capital right away? Or do you want to go after sending Miria off to fishing? Either way is fine with me."

As for the Imperial Capital, if I first take Miria to the fishing tackles shop, then drop her at the fishing spot and then go to the lodge, that'll make it two trips.
So, when do I take Roxanne and Vesta to the Imperial Capital?

"I'll go together to the fishing spot. There'll be luggage, that's why."
"As for the luggage, Miria and I will somehow manage. Right, Miria?"
"Manage, desu."

When I glance at Miria, she repeats.

"Will it be fine?"
"Yeah, it'll be fine."
"Then I'll take your word for it. Vesta should be home by now, too, so I would like to go to the Imperial Capital right away."
"Got it."

After leaving the boss room of Quratar's 17th floor, I Warp us from the small room to home.

"Welcome back."

Vesta, who had already returned, receives us.

"We're home."
"Did it go alright?"

“I won’t ever partake in a dangerous activity on my day off. Do you want to go to the Imperial Capital then?”
“Yes.”

With Vesta having tagged along, the four of us move to the Imperial Capital.
The place is the wall inside the library.
Because this place is close to the fishing tackles shop.

“If you go this way, you’ll find the Adventurer’s Guild. Since the Adventurer’s Guild is located in the shopping area, let’s meet up there before heading back.”

After stretching my arm out and indicating the location, I exit from the library.
On the opposite side is the fishing tackles shop.

I learnt of the direction to the fishing tackles shop from Sherry.
On the opposite side of the library is the posh area.
The Empire Liberation Society’s lodge seems to be in the same direction as the Imperial residence.
It’s a good location.

“Understood.”
“Day off is good, isn’t it?”
“Thank you very much. I’ll be going then.”
“See you later.”

I see Roxanne and Vesta off.
Having parted with them, the two of us, Miria and I, head to the fishing tackles shop.
Miria didn’t take as long a time as Roxanne does shopping. She bought only hooks.

She seems to be anticipating her time fishing.
Actually no, it might be due to Roxanne not being here to translate that she couldn’t talk about fishing gears.
Although she can speak Brahim somewhat, talking on a specialized subject is a totally different ball game.
Actually, there’s no knowing whether Roxanne would be able to translate technical terms or not even if she were here.

Since she bought hooks of different sizes, does she plan on catching different kinds of fish?
They may also be spares.
Even if one breaks, she'll be able to carry on.

"This hook costs 20 Nars. This one costs 30 Nars."
"These?"
"Yes, desu."

I receive the hooks from Miria and pass them to the clerk.

"4 20-Nar-hooks and 2 30-Nar-hooks. Since you're a valued customer who purchased the recommended set the other day, I'll give you a special discounted price of 98 Nars."

Miria's goods have been purchased at 30% Discount. However, because we don't have to buy fish to eat, it offsets that.
Miria takes out 1 silver coin to pay and puts the returned 2 copper coins back in.
The hooks may seem expensive. However, if you consider that it's nobles' hobby, they aren't that expensive.

I leave the fishing tackles shop, return home, pick the fishing gear up and Warp to the seashore off Hafen.
Because Hafen is in the north, is that why it doesn't feel as hot here as in Quratar?
Still, the temperature isn't low enough to keep her from jumping into the water. However, that Roxanne has already instructed her, she won't.

"Don't stray away from here till I come pick you up."
"Okay."

After telling her not to wander around, I move to the lodge in the Imperial Capital.
I appear in the lobby of the lodge.
In the lobby, there are people gathered at the end of a long corridor.
Is there some meeting taking place?
Sebastian comes out from inside and meets me.

"We were waiting for you, Michio-sama. Ester-sama came but has

left on account of an urgent business.”
“Is that so?”
“He should be back before long.”
“What has everyone gathered for?”

I point my gaze to the crowd and enquire.
The man, who was with Sebastian this morning, can also be seen in the crowd.
Is this staff assembly? Are they on a break before the afternoon assembly?
Although Sherry isn’t there, the woman who was with Sherry is.

“What about you, Michio-sama? Ester-sama will also be joining, too.”

I’ve been made to join.
Sebastian leads me to where the people are gathered.

“Arrived.”

Midway, someone’s voice resounds.
Sebastian starts running.
In a blink of an eye, the leader of the gathering stands up.

Someone has arrived.
The gate at the end of the corridor slowly opens.
Which reminds me, that gate is for the staff’s use.
The members aren’t allowed to use it. Will Ester be coming from there?

Both sides of the gate slowly swing open, facing outward of the lodge.

It’s a Japanese-style gate.
For some reason, the main gates in this world open inward.
So does the one at my house in Quratar.
Therefore, it’s a rarity to see a Japanese-style gate.
It’s my first time seeing one.

When the gate opens, Sebastian and everyone behind him bow.
Ah
I was late.

Whatever. This gate is for the staff's use anyway.
Is the person someone who is superior to even Sebastian, the General Secretary?
Are they the Chairman of the Empire Liberation Society?
The atmosphere feels terrible.

People are lined up on the either sides of the gate.
So they are someone great, after all, huh?
Close to the gate, Baron Ester and the Duke of Harz can be seen, too.

I'm the only one who has yet to bow.
I wonder if it's bad.
However, it's too late for me to do it.
It's just the atmosphere.

From the crowd, two people, Baron Ester and the Duke of Harz, come over.
What is it? Why are the two coming here?
Surprising.

"Sebastian, don't discuss the details."
"Okay, Ester-sama."
"Well then."

Ester exchanges a few words with Sebastian and halts in front of the gate.
The two, he and the Duke of Harz, move to either sides of the gate, face toward the centre and bow.
When the two bow, three men come out of the crowd at the other end and approach.

The one leading them is a thin, stern-faced, middle-aged man.
He seems to be an Earl. However, for even the Duke to bow, the other party doesn't seem to be so simple.
Behind the middle-aged man is another one.

The Emperor, Gaius Principus n'Impera | Male | 39 Years Old
Adventurer Lv41
Equipment | Orichalcum Sword | Sacred Silver Meshwear | Sacrificial Misanga

It says that he's the Emperor.
Someone great, indeed.
The Duke is bowing, too.

What do I do?
I know that he's the Emperor only due to Appraisal. If I bowed in a flurry, it would look suspicious.
However, will standing straight look appropriate?

I should have read the mood.
Reading mood.
Since I'm in the back, I'm safe. Or so I want to think.

The three people enter the lodge following which Baron Ester and the Duke of Harz enter, too, after which the gate shuts close.

Sebastian steps forward before the Emperor and receives him.
Even though he's the Emperor, he's wearing a casual tunic.
As for the Sacred Silver Meshwear shown by Appraisal, he must be wearing it underneath his clothes.

"Gaius-sama, excuse the discourtesy of my receiving Gaius-sama in such a place."
"No problem. We are well aware of the Empire Liberation Society's rules."
"To witness the admission of Gaius-sama is such a great joy which this lowly one can't bear. I'm extremely happy."
"From now on, please take care of Us."

Sebastian is talking with the Emperor.
If this is his admission, then he was not a member.
I did hear that the current Emperor isn't a member.
I didn't hear wrong.
Wasn't it the appointed time and place?
Hello, does anyone remember?

"Oh, Michio came, too, huh?"

Baron Ester finds me and speaks.
I wanted to complain but I swallow the words down.

"……Yes, just now."

“Just in time. It may have upset them but it shouldn’t have offended them.
“Haa”

I don’t want to even think about offence.
Because I know that he’s the Emperor.

“In the society, official position isn’t relevant.”

The Emperor doesn’t plan on introducing himself, it seems.
Even if he introduced, how would I approach to talk?
Should I keep pretending that I don’t know he’s the Emperor?

“This person?”

When the Emperor sees me talking with Ester, he interrupts.
Strange.
The vibes coming from him aren’t that of finding faults.
Reading mood.

“He’s Michio who’s scheduled to partake in the admission courtesy.”
“Michio here.”

Even Baron Ester is speaking respectfully. As you would expect.
I read the mood and greet him respectfully.
Albeit not deeply, I bow my head.

“Michio? Our name is Gaius.”

Well, well.
That’s a funny first-person there.
For him to say ‘Our name is Gaius’…

Chapter 171 - Initiation Ceremony

“Then let’s head to the room.”

I don’t know whether he read the awkward mood or not; however, Baron Ester offers me a way out.
He quickly starts walking and leads.
I am grateful to him.
I quickly follow behind him.

I can feel a strange pressure coming from behind me.
Four people — including the Emperor, the Duke and the Earl — have tagged along, too.
Sebastian and the other staff members seem to be staying behind.

The initiation ceremony will seemingly be held with these members.
Even the party members don’t seem to be present.
Will the initiation ceremony be held together with the Emperor?

Ester goes upstairs to the third floor, walks down the corridor and opens the first door.
I enter, determined.
It is but an ordinary room.
After I enter, the four behind me follow in as well.

“I am glad you were able to join, as I expected, without any issue.”
“Yes.”

When the Duke comes in, we exchange a few words.
Following in right after him is the Emperor.

From a glance, you can tell that the Earl, who was standing next to the Emperor, is a stern warrior.
Is he the Emperor’s guard?
In contrast with his abundant moustache, the hair on his head seems desolate.

If viewed from the top, it would probably look like a bar code.
He has a tall stature. He will be able to look down on everyone

excepting Vesta.

“Alright then, now that everyone is inside, the initiation ceremony and the admission courtesy will be conducted for Gaius, Carlos and Michio as soon as the preparations have been completed.”

Ester, who preceded us in the room, turns around and faces everyone.
However, was it really necessary to call my name in the last?
The other guy, beside the Duke, seems to be a new member, too.
Since he entered the lodge with the Emperor, he must be an official.

“Please take care of me.”

The Emperor bows.

“Please treat me well.”
“I-I will be in your care.”

I have no idea as to whom the Emperor was addressed to; however, since the other guy followed suit, I go along and greet, too.

“Gaius and Carlos have joined as second rank while Michio first rank. The initiation ceremony requires a minimum of three members as witnesses. Today, in addition to myself, Bruno, who is the referrer of Gaius and Carlos, and Brocken, who is the referrer of Michio, are present.”
“Bruno here.”
“Brocken here.”

Following Ester’s introduction, both the Duke and the Earl proceed to stand next to the Baron.
So the Earl was the referrer?
Unsurprisingly, the Emperor has joined as a higher rank than me.
I am glad.

“Then you three wait in this room for a while.”

Done with the greetings, Ester moves to the next room.
Wait a moment.
Why am I being left behind with the Emperor?
And there is another man, who may be an official, with the Emperor.

I gaze at them with pleading eyes; however, the Baron and the Duke vanish into the next room.
Oh well. Unless they know about my background, there is no way for it to be a trap.
Even the Earl leaves the Emperor behind and goes ahead.

Let's be positive.
And look at it from another perspective.
The ratio of the nobility has decreased from 4/6 to 1/3.
Considering the fact that the Emperor is not supposedly a noble, all the nobles have disappeared from the room.

"Is Michio from the human tribe?"
"Indeed. Pleased to meet you."

Impossible.
I am speaking with the Emperor.

"Casual language is fine. It is a rule of the lodge to communicate on equal terms. People around Us only use courteous words. I am eager to learn of the words spoken on the streets."

It is because you are the Emperor your majesty that people use courteous words.

"I-I understand."
"So then, are《you》from the human tribe?"[1]

That second-person is awkward.

"That's right."
"You are considerably younger in that case. How old are you?"
"I am 17 years old."

He will know my age if he looks at my Intelligence Card.
The server had better not read it.

"Are you joining at this age? That is extraordinarily excellent."
"No, it is not much."
"Disappointing. Truly disappointing. When modesty exceeds limit, it becomes immorality. Be considerate of other members and others who were not admitted."

I have been rebuked by the Emperor.
He is right. Since there would be people who were rejected even though they wanted to join, I cannot assume the air of superiority in front of those people.
As the Emperor said, huh?
He seems to be an upright person by nature.

“I see.”
“Because We were admitted after growing old.”
“That is still great.”
“It may seem an excuse but the day is too short for Us to earnestly enter the labyrinth. We tend to be busy with various matters.”

That is obvious.
You are the Emperor, after all.
On the contrary, I want to ask as to why do you even enter?

“Really?”
“Although Our official position is confidential, We have a duty of raising an heir.”

Ignoring We, Our and Us for a moment, is that the reason as to why he intends to keep it a secret?
For the time being, it seems better if I don’t know.
I don’t know.
I don’t know that this person is the Emperor.

“An heir?”
“Because there are teachings from Our ancestors which We have to pass on to Our descendents.”

I wonder.
It sounds like Uesugi Youzan, the benevolent feudal lord from Edo period.
‘The state is inherited from one’s ancestors and passed on to one’s descendants; it should not be administered selfishly.’ That guy.
Because the state is transmitted from the ancestors to the descendants, the rulers cannot do as they please is what I have heard.

Didn’t you want to say ‘Our state’?

“I don’t really get it but it sounds troublesome.”
“We could not enter the labyrinth earnestly after Our eldest child grew up to the age of 15 and became an adult. It has been a decade.”

He will be able to enter the labyrinth when the crown prince reaches the age when he can take over.
Mortality rate of infants in this world seems to be high.
Until he ensures that there is a successor, he cannot do as he pleases.

As per Appraisal, the Emperor is 39 years old.
If his child was 15 years old 10 years ago, then he must be 25 years old now.
Huh?
Doesn’t this calculation seem off?

“Are you having suspicions?”
“You look too young for that.”
“You can say that. It was Our duty.”

Did you procreate at the age of 14?
Including one year of pregnancy period, he must have procreated when he was 13 years old.
Even if it is assumed that one turns adult at the age of 15, he procreated when he was 15 years old.
When an emperor turns 15 and becomes adult, does he receive a sex partner?

I am envious.
Actually, I am not sure whether I should be envious or not.
I have heard that having sex as a duty is toilsome.
T-There is no reason for me to be envious.

“Is that so? But why are you joining after getting old?”
“If We don’t exterminate the labyrinths, there is no meaning to Our life. Because Our child needs to grow to adulthood, we have to do it in their stead.”

The Emperor gives a heroic justification.
Being an emperor doesn’t seem to always be good.

Even the Duchess, Cassia, is like that. The nobles in this world seem to have noble thoughts.
Is everyone here like that?

“Shall we begin then?”

When I was puzzled after learning of his heroic resolve, Ester comes back.
Nice timing.

“Are we starting?”
“Everyone, wear this.”

The Baron is carrying while clothes.
And is wearing one himself.
It is an oversized T-shirt.
According to Appraisal, it seems to be called Dalmatic.

“Dalmatic?”
“It is commendable for Michio to recognize it. It is an equipment handed down in the society. It is required to be worn on the occasion of admission courtesy.”

Ester passes me the Dalmatic.

“I think I saw it somewhere.”
“It is the equipment one of our Wizards wears.”
“Ah, so it was that, huh?”

The Emperor and the other man are conversing.
Like I speculated, the other man is one of the Emperor’s officials.
Since he said ‘one of our Wizards’, are they both part of the same party?
Can other party members join, too?

“Put this on and head to the next room.”
“Baron, We heard that it is unusual for more than one person to join at the same time. Is that true?”

The Emperor asks Ester.

“That’s right. This is the first time more than one person are joining

at the same time ever since I became the president.”

Okay, now that is something important.
Baron Ester seems to be the Empire Liberation Society’s President.
As a President, he is more than qualified to judge.

“As We thought, it is unusual, huh?”
“There are not many talented people appropriate for admission. There may almost be no precedent of three joining at the same time. As for you two, as you may be aware, it is a custom for the Imperial Guard to join together with the Emperor. It happened in the past, too.”

The other man is the Imperial Guard?
Since he is the one chosen from the Imperial Guards, he must be strong.
As you would expect from an emperor. They need to be guarded at all times.

There are no guards with the Duke and Baron here.
But they do have Sacrificial Misanga, so it should be alright, no?
I don’t care about the Duke, though.

“Uh, alright then. As for the order of joining, Michio should be first.”

After pondering over something, the Emperor announces.

“Because of Our occupation, we are not used to respecting others. We often look down on our companions. That is not supposed to be good. We want Michio to be admitted first, so that We respect him as Our senior brother《senior》. This way, Our arrogant heart may soften up a bit. It is unusual for three to join at the same time, so this must be a kind of guidance, certainly.”

No, wait!
Even though what you said is absolutely wonderful.

Try to put yourself in the shoes of the person being respected.
My heart will not soften.
The Emperor must be aware of the situation of the person being respected from his experience.
Because it is natural for the Emperor to be respected, is that why he

can maintain composure?

“Admirable resolve.”

Ester appreciates him.

“Is that so?”
“The order of joining will be Michio, Gaius and Carlos.”
“That is good.”

The order has been decided.
As if it were an Imperial decree.
The Emperor’s proposal must not be denied.

Actually, the Guard Carlos is in the last, after Gaius.
Is it unacceptable to show respect to a guard who accompanies you at all times?
Why don’t you have your way with your officials?

“Well then, once you have finished your preparations, come over.”
“Okay.”

Since I can’t help it, I put the Dalmatic on top-down and move to the next room.
It is quite dark inside the neighboring room.
Only two thin candles are lit.

The two candlesticks are on a long and narrow table lying on which is a white cloth. Both the Duke and the Earl are on the other side.
Both of them have the Dalmatic on.
Ester goes to the other side and positions himself between the two.

“Close the door, please.”
“Understood.”

Upon Ester’s request, the Emperor’s guard closes the door. The light from the previous room vanishes, making the room even darker.
The atmosphere feels occult.
Only the candlelight is illuminating the surroundings dimly.

“Michio, step forward.”
“Okay.”

Upon the Baron's instruction, I step forward to the front of the table.
At the same time, the Duke moves.
He shifts to the side of the table and puts equal distance between me and the Baron.

"We will now hold Michio's initiation ceremony to the Empire Liberation Society. The referrer will address the referred."
"I, Brocken, a member of the Empire Liberation Society, recognize the strength and the character of this person named Michio. I recommended him as I found him suitable to be a member of the Empire Liberation Society. Michio will bring new ideas and competition to the Empire Liberation Society. He will probably become a force in exterminating the monsters and the labyrinths."
"I, Ester, confirmed Michio's ability. If there is a person who objects his admission, come forward."

Even if you say 'a person who objects', it is my first time meeting the people here beside the examiner and the referrer.
This speech is probably a part of the courtesy.

"Michio's admission can be deemed unobjected."

After waiting for a while, the other witness, the Earl, speaks.
Summing it up was his role, it seems.

"I acknowledge Michio's admission to the Empire Liberation Society. Michio, repeat the words of oath after me."
"Okay."

Is there even such a thing?

"I promise that as a member of the Empire Liberation Society, I will not neglect putting effort and devotion in exterminating the monsters and the labyrinths."
"I, Michio, promise that as a member of the Empire Liberation Society, I will not neglect putting effort and devotion in exterminating the monsters and the labyrinths."
"And I swear not to leak any internal information of the Empire Liberation Society."
"And I swear not to leak any internal information of the Empire Liberation Society."

I repeat Ester's words and take the oath.
I don't have any reservations about the content of the oath.

"The initiation ceremony is now over. Welcome to the Empire Liberation Society."
"Yes."
"After the initiation ceremony for the remaining two people has been conducted, the new members will partake in the admission courtesy. You will have to confess one of your embarrassing sexual secrets. This courtesy is essential in order for you to reborn as a strong member of the Empire Liberation Society."

Do we have to go so far as to partake in such a courtesy?
Confession will raise sense of solidarity which will enforce sense of belonging to the society, huh?
This initiation thing.
I have a lot of secrets.

"A secret?"
"Now that you have joined the Empire Liberation Society, it is against the rules to expose secrets. Because it will not leak outside this room not matter what kind of confession it is, rest assured. As for the referrer, because they are often close, it is possible to have them leave if you wish. As for the two in the back, think over what you will confess during the initiation ceremony."
"Very well."
"Okay."

The Emperor and the Guard answer.
Are you going to make even the Emperor confess?

Should I rather reveal that I came from Earth?
If I reveal that secret here, I can have only the Emperor, the Duke and the people here know about the secret without it leaking outside. It may come in handy if something happens at some point in future.

However, they might consider it a joke if I said I came from another world.
Or if I revealed that I can cast magic even though I am an Adventurer.
It is possible to be verified without moving out of this place.

If I showed it in front of them, they would have to believe it, no?

“I have gotten tired of hearing confessions of not being able to stop masturbating. Keep in mind that until I recognize your confession, you will have to keep going.”

So It is like that.
It will not be acceptable if it is not an embarrassing sexual secret?
I wonder if something related to Sex Maniac would do.

There is a merit in sharing a secret with the Emperor or the Duke; however, exactly what kind of secret, it is difficult to decide.
If there is a research institution in the Empire’s infrastructure relating to fighting against the labyrinths, it may be sent there as research material.
Confessing a normal secret should be fine.

Notes

1. Addressing someone of lower status

Chapter 172 - Initiation

Thereafter, the Emperor and his guard perform the initiation ceremony.
Except for the Earl taking the Duke's place by the table, everything, even the speech, is the same.
These are prescribed lines.

"Since it will be Michio's admission courtesy now, do I excuse myself?"

After the guard's initiation ceremony, the Duke asks.
It is better not to let my referrer hear my embarrassing secret.
It is better to have less people listen, of course.

"Can I request so?"
"I understand. Then, I will leave my seat."

The Duke simply moves to the neighboring room.
He leaves just like that.
Is it because of the rule?

"Then, Michio will reveal his embarrassing sexual secret first. Everyone, myself included, don't laugh; listen seriously. However, if you judge that his secret isn't enough of a secret, reproach him. Michio, here."

After the Duke went out, Ester reiterates inside the room which had gone back to being dimly lit.

"Okay."

Ester urges me to the other side of the table.
Inside the dark, only the edges of the table are visible because of the candlelight.
I can faintly discern the appearance of the audience comprising four people.
It is a good setting to make a confession.

“Begin.”

Ester, who had moved to the other side, instructs.
Then, which secret I should share?

“Once, there was a pretty female clerk at a shop in the neighborhood. When she returned the change, she would always clasp my hand gently. I was certain that the girl was interested in me. Thenceforth, I would always buy from that shop and line up in front of that girl. I would always pay in large denomination even if I had small denomination available. Later on, I heard from people that she was a clerk responsible only for returning the change. Was this story different from what you usually hear?”

That was a terribly embarrassing misunderstanding.

“So trivial!”
“We didn’t get it. What was it about, really?”
“It couldn’t be more trivial.”

The Baron, the Emperor and the guard evaluate it.
It didn’t receive good reviews.
The Emperor probably doesn’t understand what ‘change’ means.

“Wha……t do you mean? Don’t tell me that the girl clasping your hand means……”

One of them seems to be stuck at a strange part.

“I didn’t get the lining up before the girl part; however, he was certainly going to propose marriage because of the misunderstanding.”

Ester interrupts.
They don’t even understand lining up at the cash register!
As for proposing marriage, it was a different feeling.

“No, it didn’t go that far.”
“That won’t do. Confessing because of a misunderstanding, getting dumped, returning home disgusted and the following series of events; if it didn’t go to that extent, it cannot be called an embarrassing secret.”

“Then, I will talk about the time when I visited a town for the first time and asked a kid for directions. Afterwards, a warning was floated about to be careful of a pervert who calls young girls over.”

I share another account because Ester had refused the first one.

“It wasn’t an interesting story.”
“For the sake security, it is necessary to call for people to be cautious.”
“I didn’t understand it well.”

This, too, gets denied by the three.

“It is alright. When I visit a town, I always keep the emblem with me and have a member of the knight order accompany me, so there is no problem.”

So, is one of them fine with it?

“In the town, whenever I see a woman waving her hand to a person behind me, I think she is waving to me which makes my heart start pounding.”
“Still not enough.”
“I was once taken care of by a woman, who I thought was somewhat beautiful, so I expended every possible valuable I had in order to present it to her. However, she told me that she had already accepted another man.”
“It wasn’t embarrassing at all.”

It didn’t pique Ester’s interest.
Even though one of them said, “that’s sad.”.

“While standing in front of a brothel, troubled to enter during the working hours, I loitered for a long time.”
“It isn’t enough.”
“I understand that feeling.”

Of course, it was the Earl who understood the feeling.

“After especially sending Brocken away, it should be something you don’t want Brocken to hear, no?”

Ester suggests.
A big one that I don't want the Duke to hear?
Should I talk about 'that'?
'That' one.

"Cassia, Brocken's wife, is quite a beautiful woman. In fact, I fell in love with her."
"This one. This is what I wanted to hear."
"We saw her, too. She is remarkably beautiful even amongst the elves. She is a considerably beautiful woman."
"I have never seen her. However, am I lucky to not have seen her?"
"I have never saw her either. Is she really that beautiful a woman?"

This one seems popular.
This one, huh?

"Of course. To the point that I want to make her mine."

Ester confirms.

"No, not to that extent."
"If you admit it right now, I will approve of your admission."
"We will also maintain silence in front of the Duke regarding this matter."
"It is alright. Nobles' relationships are only superficial; they are shallow in actuality. It is a political marriage, after all. She will give her heart to another man before long."

I am curious about the Earl's opinion.
Is it based on his own experience?

"Just a bit."
"I can't call this level of secret a confession."
"I feel inclined to accept it, though."

The Earl seems inclined to accept it.
Ester isn't budging.
Should I share another story?

"My party members comprise four female slaves and I do all four them at the same time."
"Those four certainly are pretty. However, it is common to do your

party members.”
“C-Common……”

Ester doesn’t seem amused but one of them certainly does.
Is it because they were declined from doing it?

“It isn’t to the extent of keeping it secret from Brocken. How about we allow Brocken in and denounce it together? Right, Carlos?”
“Of Course, I do all four of them equally every night.”
“Open the door……Wait!”

In the midst of threatening about letting the Duke back in, Ester stops.

“Four, everyday, you say?”

The Emperor confirms it himself.

“That’s right. Is something wrong?”
“I-Is this what you call youth?”
“However, to do it everyday just because he is young…”
“For Us, it wasn’t until We were 17.”
“Four girls……everyday……”
“But it is difficult doing it more than once or twice these days.”
“It isn’t about having to do it. It is about wanting to do it.”

The jury are whispering amongst themselves.

“I object. I object Michio’s admission.”

The Earl raises his voice.
An opposing faction seems to have emerged.

“Didn’t you say awhile ago that it is fine to accept his admission?”
“I have changed my mind.”
“But the story shared just now.”
“Is this inevitable?”
“Certainly.”

The jury continue to discuss.
The discussion seems to be advancing in a positive direction.
Except for one person.

“What is the color of your blood?”

Sensing his disadvantage, the Earl screams at me.

“However, as you would expect, since having two rounds with all four of them is too much, I do it only sometimes.”
“S-Sometimes, you say!?”
“Only sometimes?”
“Do it only sometimes?”
“Explode!”

I can hear it, you know.
Of course, the last remark was from the Earl.
To do it, you need to be able to get an erection.
Bastard, you won’t have a single strand of hair left.

You think it’s that easy?
There is a very few (strands) to begin with.
To this Bastard, even hell may only be lukewarm.

“Calm down.”
“Gununu.”
“Calm down and let’s wrap it up.”
“Alright then, Michio’s admission has been accepted. With this, Michio is a legitimate member. Now that you have reborn, work hard.”

Ester announces the decision of the entire group.
Has it been settled? Is there no need to continue?
It is all thanks to Sex Maniac that I can do all four of them everyday.

“Is it over?”

The Emperor’s guard opens the door following which The Duke enters.

“We heard something terrifying.”
“Was it that big a secret?”
“Rather than a big secret, it was a dreadful secret.”

The Emperor and the Duke converse.
It wasn’t dreadful, really.

“Gaius’ admission courtesy shall be next. What do you want Bruno to do?”
“It doesn’t matter. There is nothing you will be hearing that will trouble Us.”

The Emperor’s admission courtesy starts next.
The confident Emperor doesn’t send the Earl, who recommended him, out.
If he sent him outside, it would mean that it was a secret he didn’t want him to hear.
Removing the referrer can be good or equally bad.

“Then, begin.”
“We prefer a woman’s chest to not be big. A small and pretty chest is the best. As a matter of fact, Our father《lord father》liked women with big chest. When We were a kid, all the personnel he employed, from the wet nurse to the maid, had big chest. Our preference is perhaps a reaction to that. We are sick and tired of big chested women.”

The Emperor reveals his taste in women.
And even the late Emperor’s preference.
He must be the late Emperor for he was his father.

“That is just personal liking.”
“For a secret, it is a weak one but it can be classified as a sexual secret.”

The Baron and The Duke shoot it down.
The Duke seems to like big breasts like the late Emperor.
I don’t think Cassia’s chest can be called small.
To add to it, I think she is the type that looks slender in clothes.

“What are you saying? It is a fact that the women with small chest are the best. Good grief, small girls are the best!”

Hello, Police?

“When We were a kid, we used to hide in the corner of the room. Once, the attending maid stepped on us unknowingly. At that moment, We got sexually excited for the first time.”

“That is very interesting.”
“That pain felt great. Ever since that time, whenever We see a woman’s feet, we get excited a little. If possible, we want to get stepped on again.”

He is totally M, isn’t he?
Plus, he loves small breasts.
I can’t let him meet Sherry.
Actually, I don’t think Sherry’s breasts are that small.

“Can’t you order the attending maid?”
“They weren’t willing to do it.”

He answers the question.
Who asked that?
Well, that was scary.
He is the Emperor, after all.

“It will be difficult considering Gaius’ position.”
“It can’t be helped. We are thinking of digging a hole in the maid’s passageway and hiding there next time.”

Pervert, eh?

“Is this good enough for a secret?”
“Right.”
“I will recognize it.”

It seems to be popular with the jury.
He has totally reached the level of a pervert, though.

I have unexpectedly learnt of the Empire’s secret.
Because of the big chest loving late Emperor, the Emperor has turned into a small chest loving M.
I feel like I have violated the Empire’s privacy.

“If you are that into it, there are shoes, too.”
“Michio doesn’t accept it?”
“No, it isn’t like I don’t accept it. However, if you like it so much, you should try high heels.”

High heels don’t seem to be common amongst the women in this

world.
I have never seen them wearing those.
However, if he wishes for a woman to step on him, then it has to be with high heels.

An older woman in tight suit, wearing glasses.
Breathing sweetly, eyes piercingly cold.
A harmony between sensibility and sensual pheromones.
Unbearable!

“Hmm, high heels, huh?”
“It is a high-tier equipment for female Wizards.”
“We have seen it once. It is said to increase magic power. To be stepped on with it certainly seems powerful.”

The three nobles discuss.
So, there are high heels in this world, huh?

Are there shoes that increase men’s magic power, too?
Like tall wooden clogged sandals?
Tengu[W]’s magic power increases, too, when it puts those on.

“High heels. With that. Certainly.”

The Emperor mutters.
He seems to have realized the merit of high heels.

“Did you get it?”

Did he understand it or did he get it wrong?

“We were mistaken. But how do We wear high heels? Do We have to hide in the labyrinth, too?”

It is troublesome. I give up.

“Please stop. It is dangerous.”

The guard stops him.
It is better to stop him right now as it will be dangerous to hide in the labyrinth.
Having said that, it would be dreadful to decline the Emperor if he asked face-to-face.

It carries grim prospects.

“We will find a method in the future. As expected of Michio. It is worthwhile for Us to respect you as Our senior brother.”

I have received respect for something weird.
It isn’t something I would like to be respected for.

“Michio will suffice as his mentor when he tries it in the future. What do you say?”

Ester confirms with me.
No, I don’t want to guide him on such a weird path.
In the first place, it isn’t about whether I want to or not.

“W-Well.”
“Good. Gaius’ admission has been accepted. Now that you have reborn, work hard.”

Now he will work hard at it, too.

“Please take care of Us.”
“Lastly, Carlos. Bruno is your referrer, what would you like him to do?”
“It is alright.”

There is nothing suspicious left for the policeman Earl, to hear now.

Or so I thought; however, Carlos’ confession drew the barcode Earl in.
I want to keep my distance from him.

As for the guard’s secret, I can’t expose it anymore.
It is the rule of the Empire Liberation Society, after all.
Even if it weren’t a rule, I wouldn’t abuse a warrior’s mercy.

With such an Emperor, guard and Earl, is the Empire in safe hands?
It has been corrupted.

Chapter 173 - Dwarf Killer

“All the members’ admission has been accepted securely. The admission courtesy is now over.”

Ester declares the conclusion of the admission courtesy for all the members.
Is it finally over?
It was longer and more tiresome than I thought.
In particular, mentally.

“Gentlemen, congratulations on your admission.”
“We seek the power to exterminate the monsters and the labyrinths.”

The Earl and the Duke line up next to the Baron like before.
The Earl welcomes us properly.
I also straighten my back.
I don’t want to stand next to the Emperor, though.

“For those who have joined safely, I will be teaching you the hand sign.”
“Hand sign?”
“It is a sign to show you are a member of the Empire Liberation Society. You can use it when you need help from a member and you aren’t sure whether that person is member or not. This is the hand sign.”

Ester forms a cross with his hands in front of his body, the palm of his left hand against the back side of his right upper arm.
Is there such a sign?

“Is this good enough?”

The Emperor mimics it.

“Stretch your right arm. Like this.”
“Is it done like this?”

I give it a try.

“When I am not acquainted with someone and I want to recommend them to the Liberation Society, I show them this sign and see their reaction.”

Which means that I should have seen it already.
When I look at the Duke, surprised, he nods.

“I did that, too.”

I seemed to be tested as well.
I don’t remember when he showed it to me, though.
It is a pretty difficult to understand sign..
If you didn’t know whether the person is a member of the society or not, you would feel unease since it would be unwise to leak the secret of being a member.

“When someone shows you this sign, you return the same sign to them. When you are called for help, respond positively. I want you to support within your ability for the sake of camaraderie amongst the members.”
“I understand.”

For the time being, I should nod.
It is possible that I may need help.
I doubt, though, that I will be using it much.

“However, it is strictly prohibited to abuse it.”
“That’s right.”
“Also, there is a general meeting held every winter. Although there is no obligation for first and second ranked members to attend, I would like you to actively participate.”

Will there be such a troublesome general meeting after becoming a member?
Oh well. I expected such a thing.
And there is no obligation to attend.

“We have heard it is held around the same time as the lords’ conference.”
“That’s right. It is convenient since we gather at the same place and

many of us are members. You can drop at the lodge and enquire from the clerk about the exact date."
"Will it be difficult to participate for Us?"

The Emperor interrupts.
Is there such a thing as the lords' conference?
Many from the noble circle seem to be the members.

I guess there are many nobles, like Cassia and the Emperor, who have a sense of duty toward defeating the labyrinths.
The nobles' children create parties when they are still infant; however, only the rest of the members enter the labyrinth, forging purely the cultivation.
Only the children of the nobles and the rich can become Wizards. It is also the reason why the nobility and the affluent are stronger.

The nobles seem to gather for the lords' conference. At the same time, the members, who are part of the Empire Liberation Society, meet.
Via [Field Walk], they can gather anytime; however, since they will already be in the Imperial Capital for the lords' conference, it will be convenient.
It is a convenient schedule.
The lords' conference must be held in the Imperial Capital, of course.

However, the Emperor tends to seemingly be busy at that time.
Come to think of it, he would most likely be the organizer of the lord's conference.
There would be various reports to listen to.
Being an emperor is difficult.

"Although it will take a while, if you break through 45th floor, the breakthrough examination will be conducted. Visit the lodge and inform the Secretary."
"Breakthrough examination?"

Oh, there was that, too.
It is decades ahead, though.

"Then, does Brocken need to add anything?"
"If you are able to challenge beyond 50th floor, you should inform the

secretary of the labyrinth you enter.”

The Duke adds to it.
It doesn’t concern me.
As a member of the Empire Liberation Society, it will be easy to gain recognition if you defeat a labyrinth.
If the Emperor were to defeat a labyrinth, no one would doubt even if they didn’t know as to which labyrinth he entered.

“Is there anything Vice President Bruno wants to add?”

The barcode Earl, the policeman, seems to be the Vice President of the Empire Liberation Society.
Will this organization be alright?

“Nothing in particular. The Empire Liberation Society welcomes new members. Let’s work together and hone our skills in order to eventually exterminate the monsters and the labyrinths.”
“With this, the initiation ceremony and the admission courtesy comes to an end.”

The President and Vice President concludes it.
Someone opens the door brightens the room.
It really seems to be over, finally.

“Bring the clothes you borrowed over.”

The Earl, who had taken off the Dalmatic, quickly calls out to us.
I take the Dalmatic off and hand it over to the Earl.

“Now then, let’s move to another room and have a toast. All the members, come.”

Ester shouts after taking the Dalmatic off.
It is time for nominication.[1]
It is that, after all, huh?
21st century Japan had it. This world seems to have it, too.

“Because We lack time, excuse Us.”
“It is alright.”

The Emperor and the Earl talk while he was handing the Dalmatic

over.

“Although it tends to be a big banquet, we will only be having a light toast today.”

The Duke comes beside me and explains the Emperor’s and the Earl’s conversation in private.
I see.
Indeed. Since the Emperor is busy, he won’t have time for a big banquet.
Our gracious Emperor.

“Is that so?”
“Because Michio has joined safely, I want to host a small banquet at my house. How about in around 10 days’ time?”
“Sure.”
“Then, in the evening 10 days from now, come along with all your party members.”

While following behind Ester after leaving the room, I talk with the Duke.
He recommended me, after all. It would be impolite if I refused.
It isn’t like I have a reason to refuse in the first place.

“I was waiting for you. Did the initiation ceremony end without any problem?”

After we pass through the corridor and descend downstairs, Sebastian was waiting.

“It has finished.”
“The room has been prepared. This way, please.”

Sebastien guides us quickly to the room.
The General Secretary opens the door to the room following which all the members go in.
It is the same wide luxurious room we used when I first visited this place.
If the Emperor is going to be present, it will of course be this magnificent room.

Ester moves to the other side of the table.

The Duke also leaves me side.
I wonder if the other side of the table is for high ranked seats.
The three nobles are on that side.

The new members are on this side, huh?
There really doesn't seem to be any special treatment for the Emperor.
At the very least, the Emperor is seated in the centre while I at the edge.

"Dunkel for myself. Ask Brocken and Bruno for what they would like. And one each of Dwarf Killer and Stark Seltzer for the new members."

Baron Ester is seated in the centre at the other side of the table.
Well, he is the President, after all.

"Certainly."

Having received the orders, Sebastian leaves the room.
Is there such a drink called Dwarf Killer?

"As for the new members, if you can drink alcohol, drink Dwarf Killer. If you can't Drink Stark Seltzer. Take it home with you if you don't want to drink."

It is said that dwarves drink alcohol in place of water.
This one seems to be able to waste dwarves.
It is very strong, I guess.
The new members' bullying doesn't seem to have ended with just the confession.

"Stark Seltzer?"

Even though Stark Seltzer is an alternative to Dwarf killer, one who doesn't drink alcohol should still be careful.
It is part of the new members' bullying, surely.

Sebastian returns soon after and serves the drinks.
I am sure both the Dwarf Killer and the Stark Seltzer had been prepared beforehand.
Is bullying the new members a custom?

“This is Dwarf Killer and this one is Stark Seltzer.”

Two small jars have been placed in front of each of us.
It isn’t bisque but a glazed jar.
It has a luxurious feeling to it.

“We still have work to do after this.”

The Emperor picks Stark Seltzer up.
The guard, too, pick up Stark Seltzer.
They won’t be able to do their job if they are drunk, I guess.

“Same for me, too, then.”
“Why!? Why is nobody trying Dwarf Killer? Don’t remove the cork yet.”

When I pick Stark Seltzer up, Ester warns.
I knew I wouldn’t be able to avoid drinking it.
It is Dwarf Killer, after all.
It must be lethal for humans.

Maybe the name is just for show and it isn’t that strong?
Or, is Stark Seltzer perhaps the new members’ bullying in actuality?
Is it possible to be direct here?

“If you remove the cork, drink it in one gulp.”
“You should shake the jar before drinking it.”

Instructions on how to drink it were given by the Baron and the Duke.
Shake the jar?
The Duke is so brutal.

“Then, to celebrate the admission and the future of the new members. Cheers!”
“Cheers!”

The President toasts with everyone.
I remove the cork and pour some in my mouth.

It is carbonated water.
It really was carbonated water all along.

Bubbles pop inside my mouth.

It is quite strong.
It feels like cheaply sold Cola imported from America.

But it tastes like water, not Cola.
It contains no sugar.
It is merely carbonated water.

“Gaius should know about it; however, Michio, did you know about it, too?”

As I drank Stark Seltzer without a surprised expression, Ester asks.

“I didn’t know about it but I drank something similar back in the days. It wasn’t as strong as this, though.”
“Although it is the same spring water, it is certainly stronger than the rest.”

Does the carbonated water spring out naturally?
At any rate, they would perhaps mock the person who drank it for the first time.
It is mischievous no less.

“Should I have chosen Dwarf Killer, after all?”
“Dwarf Killer is a strong liquor, too. I have never heard of a person who can drink the jar in one gulp. It won’t be easy for dwarves either.”

Whichever drink I chose, it would be a trap, huh?
So evil.

“We have heard a story that a dwarf downed Dwarf Killer in one go. We would like to meet such a brave person if they exist.”
“I don’t know either. There is no one amongst the elves who can.”

The Emperor and The Duke don’t know anyone either.
Just because they can drink doesn’t make them that great.
It just means that they don’t have that many dwarf acquaintances.

“Don’t tell me that Sherry ordered it.”

I confirm with Sebastian.

Perhaps, Sherry is drinking Dwarf Killer in the reference room.
I would be troubled if she drank such a strong liquor and acted violently.

“Sherry-sama said that Dwarf Killer might affect her work and said that just water would be fine.”

Might, she said?
It is her day off, though, not work.
Well, her water may not necessarily be H2O.
It is a reply that can be taken in more than one ways.

“As expected of senior brother. You know such a bold person.”
“Not really. I don’t know whether she can drink it in one go or not.”
“It is on the level of ‘might affect her work’.”

I knew someone would delve in it
However, I have a bad feeling about letting the small breast loving M Emperor meet Sherry.

“I wonder about that.”
“Will it be bad for Us to meet her?”
“Sebastian, can you please do me a favor and check if Sherry is free.”

Because the Emperor started being disquieting, I ask Sebastian.
Albeit rotten, he is the Emperor.
I would be troubled if he felt offended.
I can’t not change my attitude.

A wise man changes his mind, a fool never. A fool puts on a《new》face.
A splendid person reforms his attitude, a person who isn’t fixes but the appearance.

I didn’t order her to come here.
If Sherry declines on account of being busy, no one will raise their brows.
A competent General Secretary must surely be able to read the mood.

“Did you call for me?”

Despite that, Sebastian brings Sherry right away.
I should have expected the General Secretary to be on the Emperor's side.
And it was fast, too.
I wonder if he hurried her up.

Nothing particularly changed as I take a look at the Emperor.
Be glad, Sherry.
It looks like you didn't pass the Emperor's small breasts exam.
The Earl guy would be like 'Jesus! Lolita no touch!'

"Ah. Sherry, do you know of a liquor called Dwarf Killer?"
"Yes, it is famous amongst dwarves. Even when I used to drink together with my grandfather, I didn't drink that liquor as much. It is a delicious liquor that burns your throat."

Didn't Sherry's grandfather pass away a long time ago?
Yet they used to drink together?
I have heard that this world doesn't have any minor drinking prohibitive law.
Is the phrase 'burns the throat' used to describe how good a liquor is?

"This one here is Dwarf Killer. Do you think you can drink it?"
"I don't think this quantity will have much of an effect."
"Th-Then, do you want to try it?"

I hand it to Sherry.
You rejected it in the reference room because you were afraid of the effect. Just how much did you plan on drinking?

"Is it alright? Isn't it an expensive liquor?"
"Drink it in one gulp."
"Then, I will accept it with thanks."

Sherry removes the cork and swills the liquor down directly from the jar.
As if I quenching her thirst with water, she chugs it down just like that.

Notes

1. Drinking + Communication

Chapter 174 - Dere Phase

"Ooh!"

The Emperor is surprised, too.
In front of the Emperor, Sherry easily downs a jar of Dwarf Killer.
So daring.

Is she still sober?
Was it a strong liquor?

"Are you alright?"
"Yes, this quantity isn't much."

Because it's a small jar, the quantity can't be much, certainly.
Still, she drank it like she was drinking water.
Was it actually water, perhaps?
Thinking so, I receive the jar from Sherry; however, it was genuinely alcohol.

"It's great."
"Yes, it's a great liquor. Is it 30-year-old Russo? If it weren't that aged, it wouldn't make you this mellow."
"As expected of Sherry-sama. This lodge does have 30-year-old Brightest Russo."

Sebastian approves Sherry's taster capability.
Does strong liquor make you mellow?

"Wonderful. Would you like to taste Ours, too?"

The Emperor shows her a jar.

"'Ours'?"
"This."

While Sherry had her head tilted, the Emperor personally offers the jar.
Because I didn't say anything, is that why I didn't receive yet?
Should I have received at least once?

Is it fine for Sherry to receive personally from the Emperor.

It should be fine for it's not known that he's the Emperor.
Sherry receives a famous brand of alcohol from the Emperor.
To a third person, the scene appears grand.
I wonder if the person concerned, Sherry, realizes it, too.

"Still, if I drink this much, I may get a little drunk."

That's why you should have declined.

"There's no problem with getting drunk a little. Go ahead."

I push Sherry, flurried.
You can't not drink his alcohol. If he asked, it had to be done.

"……Okay."

After glancing at Sebastian, Sherry uncorks the jar.
Is Sebastian's opinion more important to her than mine?
In crucial times, you seek an elderly for help.
Unfortunately, however, the other party is the Emperor.
Sherry drinks the Emperor's liquor with ease.

"Ooh. Can you still go on? Carlos."
"Yes."

The guard presents a jar to the Emperor which he, once again, bequeaths to Sherry.
I don't think he's intentionally exaggerating it.
That's just how he is.
Sherry downs the third jar.

"Is it alright to drink this much?"
"I'm feeling good a bit. I've gotten a little drunk, I think."

Upon the Emperor's enquiry, Sherry replies soberly.
A drunk would never say they're drunk.
They remain cool headed to the end.
When you're drunk, do you become intellectual?

"Still, it took you three rounds to get drunk. Marvellous. If you're ever troubled, you can visit Us."

“Okay. Thank you very much?”

She answers questioningly.
I must say, even if we visit, you’ll just turn us away.
Literally.

“Well then, although it’s regrettable, we have to get back to official business.”
“I guess.”

The Emperor gets up from his seat followed by the guard.
Even though it’s such a place, Sherry won’t step on the Emperor, right?
On the other side, the three nobles stand up, too.

“Well then, Michio, we’ll be going, too.”
“See you in ten days.”
“Bear in mind that you’re not perfect, so work hard as a member.”

The three speak to me.
The Earl does harbor ill intentions.
Will these three nobles be returning with the Emperor?
Well, they did come together, so it shouldn’t be surprising.

“Well then.”
“Alright then, senior brother, see you sometime.”

Nope, I don’t want to.
The Emperor’s group leaves the room.
Should Sherry and I have seen them off, too?

“Gaius-sama, thank you for today. Please bestow this place with your royal visit again.”

Sebastian accompanies them to the end and offers valediction before sending them off.
As you would expect, all the staff members of the lodge are together with him.

“‘Royal visit’?”
“It just means visit again.”

Fortunately, it's a word which Sherry doesn't understand.
What's more concerning is that all the staff members are bowing.

"As expected of Master. Your Brahim language is superb."

She's definitely drunk, isn't she?
For Sherry to sound like Roxanne.

"Really?"
"But that gate is odd."

While I was thinking so, she points out.
Because she's drunk, is that why?
Or because it's a Japanese style gate?

"Well, it does look unusual."
"A gate normally opens inward. If not, it wouldn't be of use in defense. The reason being, if a door opens inward, it can be blocked by something, making it difficult to be forced open immediately from outside."
"Is that so?"

Is that the reason as to why front gates open inward?
Then, the reason as to why Japanese gates open outward must be because it's peaceful there.
However, even in Japan, a temple gate opens inward.
In Sengoku period, the temples were military installations.

Then, why does a modern Japanese gate opens outward?
Because it's convenient.
Imagine the main gate of your house.
If it opened inside, shoes would be an immediate nuisance.
And it would eventually turn into a rabbit hutch.

"If you think about it, it must be important to have it open outward rather than inward."

Sherry continues to contemplate.
I see.
The Emperor did walk in from outside.
The lodge must be located somewhere the Emperor can walk to.

The library is close by the Emperor's Imperial residence, too.
In other words, it's important to have it open outward.
This must be the reason as to why the location of the lodge is private.

"Is the other party the reason as to why the lodge isn't invaded?"
"But how important is this other party?"

It would be bad if it went on any further.

"It was my bad to have you called."
"Noo, I was happy that Master called me."
"Really?"

In order to change the topic, I offer her an apology.
I wish you had declined.

"Ah, excuse me. Can you please give me a minute?"
"What is it?"

Well awake, Sherry trots away.

"Although I was doing work, I unfortunately got a little drunk."

Sherry talks to the woman who had returned after sending the Emperor off.
She's the same woman who led her to the reference room.
The work she's talking about must be the same from awhile ago.

"Is that so? It's alright."
"No, no, Sherry-sama. That alcohol was a royal gift."

Sebastian interjects.

"Royal gift?"

Therefore, it wasn't wrong.

"What's this work you were talking about?"

I enquire, changing the topic.

"Yes. There is a plethora of reports in the reference room sent by the members who have successfully subjugated the labyrinths. Most

of them comprise a single papyrus. They are required to be copied to the parchment. Since I have already read them, it's easier for me to copy them, so I accepted the part time job of a transcriber."

Such a job, huh?
If a report were on papyrus, it would crumble over time.
Therefore, they seem to transcribe it on the parchment.
So she's a copier, huh?

"You were doing such a thing?"
"I did something selfishly. I'm sorry."
"It's fine."
"But I have gotten drunk a little."

If she were drunk, there would be a risk of mistake while copying.

"It was I who made Sherry drink the alcohol. That being the case, I'm the one in the wrong."

I cut in and stand before the female staff member.
If it's tiny Sherry, I'll be enough to cover her.
Sherry huddles close and hides behind me.

She's so close that she's touching my back.
Sherry quietly holds my arm with her hands.
Somehow, she looks so cute.

"There's no issue, of course. Then, I'll have Sherry-sama's luggage brought here."

Says Sebastian and instructs the female staff member.
The woman bows and departs.

"Is that fine, Sherry."
"Yes."

I receive Sherry's consent.
After taking a while, the female staff member comes back.
The woman hands a rucksack to Sherry.

"Your luggage has been put inside. And this is your remuneration for transcribing. I skimmed through it, your work was meticulous. Thank

you for today.”
“Thank you, too.”

She receives the luggage and some silver coins as remuneration.
As for the time she took, was she verifying the work performed?
Even if it had been transcribed, if it were illegible, it’d be useless.
Sherry carries the rucksack on her back and hands me the silver coins.

“Because it’s the remuneration of Sherry’s work, Sherry should be the one to keep it.”
“Are you sure?”
“You did this on your day off, after all.”
“Thank you very much, Master.”

A smile blooms on Sherry’s face.
This is bad.
She’s so cute.
Sherry looks a bit different from her usual self.

Is it finally her dere[1] phase?
Or, is it because she’s drunk?

“Then, let’s return home?”
“Yes.”

Because she was looking so cute, I bring her back home.
It was just the two of us, of course, when we return home.
It’s probably the first time I’m alone with Sherry.
Moreover, it’s her drunken dere phase.

Sherry is bolder than usual probably because she’s drunk.
The moment we step into the house, she throws her arm around my neck.
Tiny Sherry stretches her back as much as she can.

Without a moment’s delay, I take her to the bed.
Sherry’s hesitant yet honest voice is so lovely.
After enjoying without Sex Maniac, I select Sex Maniac and indulge in it once again.
She slightly reeks of alcohol; however, it’s within permissible limit.

After we enjoy each other, Sherry begins to quietly let out sleeper's breathing.
I produce some hot water, wipe my body and move to the Imperial Capital Adventurer's Guild.
Roxanne and Vesta are there, huh?
I head into the two's direction.

While I was walking on foot, I find the two rushing out of a distant shop on the street.
There's still quite some distance.
Roxanne starts running in the lead.

"Master, thank you very much for today."

Roxanne's dere phase is on 24/7.
So pretty.

"Thank you very much."

No sooner, Vesta catches up.
Vesta, who's taller than me, is pretty, too.
I feel so even more after having enjoyed the tiny Sherry.

"I took a bit more time. Did it go okay?"
"It was okay. Us two, Vesta and I, fully enjoyed our time around here."
"Yes, it was fun."

The two of them enjoyed their time, too, it seems.

"Were you and Sherry together at home?"

Roxanne figures it out.
Busted.

"Ah. Sherry drank a strong liquor, so I put her to sleep."
"I'm glad that Master got to enjoy himself, too."

Totally busted.
When you're in a party, you can find out other members' direction.
So inconvenient!

"Do you want to return immediately or do you want to visit more

places?”

I sound like a trash husband who’s offering her wife compensation after having an extramarital affair.
And then she extorts dresses and jewellery.
However, it doesn’t end at just that.

“It’s alright.”
“Then, let’s return ahead of time and prepare the bath?”
“Yes. I’ll accompany you to the labyrinth. We can also fight monsters stronger than Black Diamond Tuna.”

She accepts the compensation with an added condition of the labyrinth.
Engaging in a boss battle isn’t required, though, to recover MP.

“Because the member constitution is different this time, it’ll be a fresh take.”

Because she had nothing to do, I take Vesta along, too.
Better three than two.
Vesta unfortunately gets caught up in the backlash. However, like I said, it’ll be a fresh take, so it’s fine.

I heat the bath while partaking in the boss battle; after which, the three of us go and pick Miria up.
When we move from the forest to the shore, Miria was, once again, surrounded by people.
She’s completely reigning as a legendary angler.

She distributes some and brings the rest home.
There’s plenty for us to have fish sanmai tonight.

“There are shrimps, too, huh?”
“Fish exchange, desu.”
“Did you exchange it with fish?”
“Morning catch, desu.”

The other party seems to catch fish only. However, this morning, they caught shrimps, so they exchanged it.
Excellent sized shrimps are in the basket.
There are no less than five.

“Can I fry the shrimps?”
“Entrust, desu.”

Although tartar sauce can’t be made immediately, it’s alright.

“Also, there are some fish which should be deep fried.”
“Alright, desu.”
“Then, I’ll leave rest of the cooking to Miria.”
“Yes, desu.”

After leaving rest of the dishes to Miria and putting the luggage down, I leave for shopping.
I buy bread, eggs and vegetables.
When I return home after buying the cooking ingredients, Sherry had just woken up.

“I’m sorry. I seemed to have slept.”
“It’s alright. There’s no problem, right?”
“Yes. After sleeping for a while, I feel refreshed. I’ll help Miria with cooking.”

Sherry doesn’t snuggle to me like she did earlier.
She goes to Miria curtly.
Her dere phase seems to be over.

I have Vesta help me with the cooking.
While Vesta makes the bread crumbs, I fry the lean tunas and the shrimps.
It’s tuna cutlet.
Although it’s fish, it tastes like meat.

After deep frying for a bit, I boil water in a pot, then add wine, fish sauce and dragon skin.
I put the tuna cutlet and the fried shrimps where I was boiling and drop a beaten egg.
It’s fish cutlet tamago toji[W].
Even though there’s no sauce, it’ll suffice.

Notes

1. Dere = lovestruck

Chapter 175 - Stocking

“It has a tender taste.”
“It’s delicious. It’s mellow and soft outside while it has ample volume inside.”
“Wow, desu.”
“I think It’s nutritious and delicious.”

The tuna cutlet tamago toji seems to be popular with the four.

“This- the idea of putting egg on it is innovative. It’s delicately made. As for whether it’s delicious, It’s hard to say as I’m not used to eating it.”
“So it’s no good?”
“No, we can tell that it’s delicious because we’re used to your cooking. Generally, however, the dishes here are crudely made.”

Sherry critiques in detail.
So, is it a compliment or is it not?
One thing is certain, though, that her dere phase has ended.
She has refreshed after having slept for a while.

A dwarf’s liver is strong, surely.
Actually, if it’s a dwarf we’re talking about, every cell of theirs probably breaks the alcohol down to Acetate which is then probably consumed in the Citric Acid Cycle of Mitochondria.

Ethanol is broken down to malignant Acetaldehyde, which may be a cause of hangover, which is further broken down to Acetate.

Via the process, Acetate becomes strong Acetyl Co (Coenzyme) A.
Acetyl CoA is broken down to Glucose which produces Pyruvate. When it enters the Cirtic Acid Cycle, it generates a large quantity of energy.

In short, liquor becomes fuel, literally.
Terrific.

However, I do understand that tamago toji is delicate.

The egg in tamago toji is claimed to add rather delicate flavor than a strong taste.
I distribute the dragon skin soup.

Compared to tamago toji, the fish soup made by Miria and the fish saute made by Roxanne under Miria's directions are quite simple.
I can even infer the materials used from the taste.
These dishes are mainstream.

Because the four of them are used to eating my dishes, they're able to appreciate tamago toji.
That's probably it.
It's complicated.

"Which reminds me, was there any interesting shop in the Imperial Capital?"

Amidst self-analysis, I throw a topic to Roxanne at the dinner.

"Yes, there was an interesting shop. Right, Vesta?"
"Yes, I think it was an interesting shop."

The two, Roxanne and Vesta, nod.

"Hee, what kind of shop?"
"Fufu, it's a secret."

Roxanne smiles, amused.

"S-Secret?"
"Yes. I think it'll be better if you don't know for the time being."

Even Vesta maintains it as a secret when I try to ask her.
Why can't you tell me?
Since you said 'for the time being', do you plan on telling me some other time?
Although I have no idea, they seem to have enjoyed their day off.

"Did you find any interesting information in the reference room, Sherry?"

I try to enquire Sherry.
Since she has rested, she shouldn't be drunk, so it should be alright.

“That’s right. Step Increase in Damage skill. It should be considerably useful.”
“Step Increase in Damage?”
“Yes, a skill that deals more damage with 2nd attack than 1st, 3rd attack than 2nd and so on if you attack the same monster. Even if attached to a stick, it effectively applies to magic just as well.”
“Sounds useful.”

The damage source of our party is Durandal and magic.
I have enhanced other weapons; however, it has but little significance.
Durandal can’t be enhanced any further for it doesn’t have any empty skill slot.
But Sherry isn’t aware of that.

Therefore, I’m grateful that it increases the magic damage, too.
Presently, I can’t take a monster out in a single blow.
It’ll be even less likely the higher I advance up the floors.

“To tell you the truth, I knew the existence of Increase in Damage skill; however, I wasn’t of the impression that it would be of use. After all, it’s best to attach it to a powerful weapon. If attached to a Copper Sword or the likes, you can’t expect the damage to increase much.”
“Houhou”
“The person who submitted the report had the skill attached to an Orichalcum Spear. Also, they subjugated the labyrinth. It’s incredible that they cleared the labyrinth without relying on magic. I had no idea it was such a great skill.”

And why didn’t you inform me of such a skill till now?
So, its effect increases if the weapon is strong.
Even if it were attached to a Copper Sword, it wouldn’t produce good results. However, if it’s attached to an Orichalcum weapon, it’ll be able to dish out considerable damage.
So much so that even the last boss can be slain.

“Last, huh?”
“They said that the last boss battle was scary.”
“Because the last boss has the ability to destroy the equipment.”

Had the Orichalcum Sword with Step Increase in Damage skill been destroyed, it would've been all over.
You can have someone take on it from the front while you attack it from behind; however, that's walking on a tightrope.
It would be synonymous to stepping on thin ice.

"Apparently, a Damascus Steel Spear can yield great effect, too. It was written that they obtained the Orichalcum Spear from the Empire Liberation Society. Step Increase in Damage skill seems to be rated highly in the Empire Liberation Society."

If attached to a weak weapon, it wouldn't produce good results; consequently, it would be rated poorly.
Sherry was of the same thought.
Because there are many members in the Empire Liberation Society who use powerful weapons, is that why this skill is rated highly?
Moreover, since the information doesn't leak out of the Empire Liberation Society, the high rating couldn't be passed on outside.

"Step Increase in Damage, huh? Should I ask of Luke?"
"To attach Step Increase in Damage skill, you need a Bee Monster Card and a Kobold Monster Card. If you only used a Bee Monster Card, it would grant Increase in Damage skill. If it's fused with a strong weapon, Step Increase in Damage skill will make a clear difference and vastly improve the effect."
"Got it."

The higher the damage of the weapon, the more dominant the Step Increase in Damage skill.
In order to attach the skill, a Bee Monster Card will have to be fused simultaneously.

"Very well."
"Aren't you mistaking the Bee Monster Card skill with Anaphylactic Shock?"
"Ana what?"

When a bee stings, its poison creates Antibodies. When it stings the next time, the excessive Antibodies cause Immunoreaction.
That's Anaphylactic Shock.
When stung a second time, the damage is higher than the first time.

That the skill granted by a Bee Monster Card deals more damage with 2nd than 1st, 3rd than 2nd and so on, it must be owing to the poison embedded into the enemy.

“If you have noticed, the poison of a bee inflicts more damage the second time compared to the first time. During the first attack, the bee produces reserve toxin in the body. During the next attack, it triggers.”

I explain to Sherry who had gotten over her dere phase.
With this, she will respect me a bit.
If I mentioned Antigen or Antibodies, she wouldn’t get it.

“Un, I haven’t heard such a thing. In the first place, there’s no explanation as to why a Bee Monster Card grants the Increase in Damage skill.”

Nope, it was of no use.
Oh well. That’s just how it is.
Furthermore, there’s no guarantee that the poison of this world’s bees is the same as Earth’s.

“Is that so? As expected for master.”

Roxanne is my only heartmate.

“Shell, desu.”
“What do you mean, Miria?”
“xxxxxxxxxx”
“It’s same as the poison of a shellfish. If you eat it the first time, the symptoms aren’t apparent. However, when you eat it a second time, the symptoms are potent. It may even prove fatal. Miria says that it’s her first time hearing the reason behind it.”

Roxanne translates.
Which reminds me, the shellfish in this world is poisonous. Unless it’s a dropped item, it can’t be eaten.
Does the shellfish cause Anaphylactic Shock?

Miria directs a respectful gaze at me.
It didn’t work on Sherry but it did on Miria.

“If it’s the same in case of a shellfish, then it may be true.”

Oh, I kinda pass.
Sherry nods, too.

“Ana, Ana, desu.”
“It’s Anaphylaxis.”
“Anaphylaxis, desu.”

You don’t have to particularly learn it
Actually, it was translated into Brahim.
Oh well. It’s Miria we’re talking about. She’ll forget it by tomorrow.

After the dinner, I take bath with everyone.
There’s still some time left for the day.
I can challenge the limits of Sex Maniac.
I should let Sherry have a break.

“Master, would you please go ahead to the bedroom?”

When I step out of the bath, Roxanne requests.
Why?
Even though changing clothes with everyone is fun in its own right.

To be surrounded by four extreme beauties changing into their clothes.
My heart is throbbing.
Getting out of the bath, I move to the other side. I can just undress them again.

I can’t help but imagine Roxanne’s bulge struggling under the white nightgown.
I can’t help but imagine Vesta’s big fat lumps, covered.
I can’t afford to miss it even a single day.

“……Got it.”

While my heart was shedding tears of blood, I accept.
After changing into my clothes, I head to the bedroom.
Will I have to keep sulking in the bed?

It won’t do.

I'll have to punish them.

"Master, may we?"

Roxanne's voice chimes after a while.

"O"

First off, I reply appropriately.

"Excuse us."

The door opens. Four girls enter.
The four of them line up beside the bed.

"O?"

On top, the four are wearing the usual negligee dress camisole.
Nothing new.
However, on their legs, they're wearing something black.

"How does it look?"
"OO?"
"Today, when I was with Vesta, we found a shop in the Imperial Capital."
"OO"

The four girls have black stockings on.
It's knee high.

It's stocking.
Black legs extending down the hem of the camisole look sexy.

"It was a nameless shop but it had such a thing."
"OO. OO."

I get close and check it.
The fabric is nicely thin.
It's see through yet not bare.
It's fantastic.

"It's highly expensive but it's not durable that's why it's not common."
"O. O?"
"Yes, you can touch it."

When I look up at Roxanne from below, she permits me.
When I touch, it was smooth and *subesube* silky.
It's unbearable.

"OO"
"I'm glad that I decided to buy it."
"OO. OO."

I wanted to stroke her cheeks but I control myself and slowly stroke.
From her calf to her knee to her thigh.
While I was stroking, the hem of her camisole gets disordered.

There's……garter belt……

The stocking was hanging off the garter belt.
There was no gum (elastic) in this world, so the stocking would obviously hang off the garter belt.
Just like the stocking, the garter belt is black, too.
Between the two is the white 'absolute territory'.

Should such a thing be permitted?
Should such a wonderful thing exist?

My heart throbbing as if in a bewitching garden.
Like a man stranded in the forest of Shangri la.
A beautiful space painted by night.
A heavenly orchard chokingly brimming with sweet, mellow fragrance.

Eat.
Eat.
Eat.
With the tenor saxophone playing sweet blues, there's nothing but insatiable lust.

I lose myself as if possessed.
With no sense of time, I dig in like a baby.
Lost completely, I indulge in eating.

I select Sex Maniac. I wonder, however, if I really need it.
I do. With the assist of Sex Maniac, I can go for a second round.
I bench Sherry during the second round.

The next day. I visit the Imperial Capital after having the breakfast.
Like you guessed, I have a business at the shop which Roxanne and Vesta found.
From the Adventurer's Guild, I have the two guide me.

"Here's the shop."

Bathing in the yellow sunlight is a compact clothing shop.
There's a nameless shop on the street.
Rather than order made, it seems to be pret a porter.

"Alright. Each of you may buy one piece of clothing you like."
"Are you sure?"
"It's okay."

I let the four of them choose.
Honestly, it would be cheaper if they bought only stockings but I can't say that out loud.
Although I want to compensate Roxanne and Vesta for what they spent out of their small allowance, I want to spend money discreetly.

"How may I help you?"

The clerk with overjoyed face greets us.
Because he's sure to sell four garments at the very least.
I take him to the side while the four of them were choosing.

"There seem to be stockings in this shop."
"Yes. The durability is a concern but it's a prototype at this stage. As far as the fit and the texture is concerned, we can take pride in it."

I touched it and it certainly felt good.

"Can I have one?"
"Which size?"
"Ah, normal would do."
"Very well. One would be 500 Nars."

It's expensive.
It would be 2,000 Nars for four.
For they didn't have 30% Discount, Roxanne and Vesta had to use up all their allowance.

Shouldn’t I be glad?
I am.

“I’ll pay the money at the end.”
“Very well.”

I order one stocking.
I’ll have to take it to the lodge later.
If I pass it to Sebastian, it’ll reach the Emperor eventually.
I must share this unspeakable joy with his majesty the Emperor, too.

Chapter 176 - Increased Attack

After I order a stocking, the four girls return.
The four of them have yet to choose any clothes.
For now, let's hear the state of affairs.
First up is Roxanne who has a ghastly expression about her face. Pass.

"There is hardly any of small size."

Next up is Sherry who's complaining. Pass.

"xxxxxxxxxx"

Miria is muttering something. Pass.

"There aren't many of big size. Which one do I choose?"

Vesta seems to be troubled as well.
I pass Vesta, too.
Huh?
Should I first go to Roxanne, after all?

"What do you think? Found anything good?"
"All the dresses are of high quality. It will be difficult to wear them inside the labyrinth."
"It will be fine to wear such clothes. We have been invited by the Duke again. "
"Thank you very much."

It really is a luxury shop, like I suspected, even though it is small.
Well, it is alright to choose such clothes if you like to wear them.

"By the way, what was Miria saying?"
"Apparently, she is looking for clothes which can assist her in catching fish."

What the hell kinda clothes are you looking for!?
Actually, this kind of clothes may be available in this world.
Or, there may be clothes applied with fluorescent paint.

Thereafter, I decide to observe quietly.
Amongst the four, Vesta is the first one to select clothes.
Is that because there were fewer choices?

The dress is an extravagant one-piece.
If it is this one, it will do.
If she chose one for the piano recital, it would be embarrassing.

Unfortunately, however, the dress Vesta chose doesn't receive Roxanne's approval.
It has been adjudged bad for reason unknown and returned.
Nevertheless, the direction they are going in isn't wrong. The four girls take their time choosing clothes and finally decide on one after trying them on.

"It really looks good on you."
"Yes, thank you very much. Then, I think I will take this one."

Roxanne finally selects her dress.

"Are you guys fine with yours?"
"Yes."

Sherry and Vesta seem to have found the clothes they like.
As for Miria, she seems to have given up searching for clothes designed to lure fish.

"Then, I would like to order these, please."
"Okay. Since you are buying the clothes in bundle and, umm, since it's your first time as my customer, it will be 8,750 Nars as a special service."

30% Discount worked, huh?
It would be 1 gold coin if it weren't for 30% Discount.
It does seem to be expensive.

After the girls receive their respective clothes, we leave the shop.
I'm holding the bag which has the stocking I bought.

"Thank you for such expensive clothes."
"Because you guys looked good in them."

This much is okay since I am not troubled with money.
And, if the four girls get to dress up, it will make me happy.
I can enjoy this and that (and that).

“Master seems to have gotten something, too.”
“Yeah, it is just a…”
“Just a…?”

Roxanne is probing.
A stocking is for women, after all.
She probably knows what is inside.

“Sherry received liquor yesterday, so it is just a ‘thank you’ gift.”
“Really?”

I wonder if she bought that.
Giving a stocking as a ‘thank you’ gift in return of liquor sounds weird.
However, truth is stranger than fiction.
The one I am giving it to is unexpectedly a pervert who exceeds the common sense.

I move from the Imperial Capital Adventurer’s Guild to the lodge.

“Thank you very much for this pleasant surprise, Michio-sama, Roxanne-sama, Sherry-sama, Miria-sama and Vesta-sama.”

Sebastian comes to greet us.

“I wasn’t able to see the shop yesterday, so I came to have a look.”
“Yes, as you please.”
“Also, when Gaius visits, I would like you to give this to him.”

I pass Sebastian the bag with the stocking inside.
Because I passed to him what I bought from the shop, Roxanne would believe that I didn’t gift it to a woman.
Sherry can testify that Gaius is not a young woman.

Oh?
Wasn’t his name not mentioned in front of Sherry?

“This is?”

“This is a ‘thank you’ gift for the liquor Sherry received yesterday. It isn’t anything suspicious.”

On a second thought, it really is suspicious.
Sebastien will surely check it since it will be given to the Emperor; however, the content is merely a stocking.
It isn’t an explosive or a cutter or poison.

“I understand. I will keep it.”
“Tell him to ‘work hard’.”

Whether the Emperor will get it or not by just receiving the stocking, I am not sure.
So, I left him a hint.
As for the meaning of ‘work hard’, the Emperor needs to figure it out himself.
The Emperor will perhaps think of how to get stepped on.

“This way then, please.”

Thereafter, Sebastian guides us to the shop.
The outstanding equipment were not there but they seem to have been replaced with several other equipment.
New products seem to arrive about every 6 days.
It would be troublesome to check everyday; however, it will be fine if I drop by once every week, no?

When I look at the new equipment in front of me, there was a Staff of Increased Attack.
It has the Progressive Increase in Damage skill attached to it.
It is the skill Sherry mentioned.

“This wasn’t here the last time I came.”
“Yes. It is an equipment that came recently. It is called Staff of Increased Attack. I recommend this staff if there is a Wizard, from beginner to high level, in the party.”

I don’t think there would be a beginner in the Empire Liberation Society, though.
Oh well. It can also be used as a present, I guess.

“It is certainly a good as staff.”

“Conditions apply, though, as It would be problematic if anyone beside the party members of the society members used it.”
“Ah, so it really is like I thought.”

Looks like it can’t be used as a present.
If I used an excellent weapon that has Progressive Increase in Damage attached, I could figure out how Progressive Increase in Damage works.
That’s why only the party members of a society member can use it.
Is it in place to safeguard information leakage?

I don’t think it would be wrong, though, if it were made public.
However, not everything can be shared.
Since it is rarely seen around here, is it perhaps to inhibit equality?

It is preservation of a secret society’s secret.
I am afraid I would be secretly disposed of if I leaked the secret.
I have to do my best to be careful.

Rather, if I didn’t know the circumstances, ‘the Staff of Increased Attack seems to be a good weapon,’ is what I could blabber outside.
It will be bad if I don’t pay attention.
I better instruct the four of them.

“Still, it is a considerably popular piece of equipment. I believe it will be sold within 10 to 20 days and I don’t know when I will be able to get one again. What do you think?”

Is that the pace which it sells here at?
It does look like it will be fine if I visit once every week, after all.

“I still don’t have any point.”
“So, it is like that?”

The Staff of Increased Attack really is a good weapon but I cannot purchase it now.
I tell Sebastian I will visit again and leave the lodge.
Upon returning home, we put the clothes down.

“About that staff, don’t leak the information about the Empire Liberation Society even by mistake. Everyone needs to be careful.”
“I see. We will be careful.”

Only Sherry responds.
Miria and Vesta don't seem to have gotten a hint.
As they tilt their neck, thinking hard.
Roxanne doesn't say anything but she isn't the sort that speaks thoughtlessly outside.

In the evening the same day, I receive a word from Luke about the successful bid on a Kobold Monster Card. I decide to pick it up in the morning the next day.
Because I bought a Kobold Monster Card 5 days ago, this will be a second.

By the way, after the bath, the four girls put the clothes we purchased today on.
It's a lovely silk one piece. Brilliant.
What do you think, though?
What kind of a man do you four think I am?

What if it gets wrinkled?
It's a soft silk one piece. It feels good to touch.
It feels great to touch and hug.

I enjoy it without minding it getting wrinkled, of course.
This kind of a man I am.

"This is the Kobold Monster Card."

I receive the Kobold monster card at the Merchant's Guild.

"More Kobold Monster Cards to spare will be better. Can I count on you to buy the next one at 5,000 Nars?"
"Certainly."

I place the order for a Kobold Monster Card.
I won't be bothered no matter how much it costs.

"I was forced to use a Misanga of Sacrifice. I want you to go for a Caterpillar Monster Card same as before."
"The labyrinth seems to be going in good direction. That is great."
"I guess it is better to have a spare."
"As you wish."

To tell the truth, I will be selling the Misanga of Sacrifice in the lodge.
It won't be a spare.
I already have a spare.

"Also, I want to procure a Bee Monster Card."

I come to the main point: the Bee Monster Card.

"Bee Monster Card?"
"That's right."
"Even though the fused skill of a bee monster card isn't popular, it still sells for a high price."

From the fact that Sherry didn't know about it, you can tell that this skill isn't popular.
It would be so if the weapons with this skill attached, exhibited at the auction, were weak.
Therefore, the price shouldn't be high.

However, if it is fused with a strong weapon, it will be another story.
Those who know bid high on it.
Like the Empire Liberation Society members.
Therefore, the price of a Bee Monster Card is high.

There is, of course, no way I can tell him that a Bee Monster Card is useful.
Because I would breach the confidentiality of the Empire Liberation Society if I did.

"Is that so? Well, I was asked a favor by an acquaintance."
"I have a sword fused with a Bee Monster Card, would you like to see it? I purchased a lot some time ago from a certain place. It was a pile of stock that didn't sell, though."

When I come up with an appropriate excuse, he clings onto it.
But it is a skill that won't work with weak weapons.
How do I decline him?

"They intend to fuse it with a weapon they use, it seems. They will give up after failing a few time."
"Is that so? Then, it cannot be helped. It is called Damascus Steel Sword of Increased Attack by the way."

Damn!
Since it is called ‘Increased Attack’, the skill must be Progressive Increase in Damage.
Same as the Staff of Increase Attack back at the lodge.

Earlier, Sherry said that Damascus Steel would be fine, too.
Whether it will be of use to our party or not, I will not lose anything if I get it.
There shouldn’t be a problem in selling it at the lodge.
How do I secure it?

“Since there is nothing to lose, should I recommend it to them? They may accept it. There is a chance since they seem to mostly fail.”
“Can you, please?”
“It is a Damascus Steel Sword of Increased Attack, after all.”

Because I want to fuse it with the Sacred Spear, I want a Bee Monster Card.
As it doesn’t seem to be a card that can easily be procured, I should take this opportunity to order another one.
Procuring Damascus Steel Sword of Increased Attack sounds good, too.
It is rather to sell at the lodge than to strengthen our party.

“Based on the price of the swords and the monster card, it should be 200,000 Nars, so I would like to receive at least 200,000 Nars; however, since it is an unpopular skill, how about 180,000 Nars?”
“180,000 Nars? I will convey the offer to them.”

If Luke himself fought inside the labyrinth, he would realize how helpful Damascus Steel Sword of Increased Attack is.
He would fall for such a trap if he worked only as a broker.

“As for the Bee Monster Card, I think it will be difficult to get one within 5,000. It will cost a little more.”
“How about 5,500?”
“Then, I should be able to obtain it soon.”
“Go ahead with that then.”

After placing the order for a Bee Monster Card, I leave the Merchant’s Guild.

The acquisition of the Bee Monster Card turned out to be rather quick.
Two days later, when I finished exploration for the day and returned from the labyrinth, I found a note from Luke.

“Master, there is a message from Mr. Luke. It says that he has managed to successfully acquire a Bee Monster Card at 5,500 Nars.”

Roxanne reads the note out.
It was quicker than even the Kobold and the Caterpillar Monster Cards?
The successful bid is exactly 5,500.
I knew it would be so.

“I should be able to make it there in time, right? I will be heading out for a while.”
“Okay. Please take care.”

I was seen off as I left the house.
I [Warp] to the Merchant’s Guild.
Luke shows up immediately after I call for him.

“Here is the Bee Monster Card.”

He takes out the monster card after we move to the meeting room.
It is genuinely a Bee Monster Card.

“Indeed.”
“I managed to win it easily this time because there wasn’t much competition.”

You raised the bid to 5,500 even though there was no competition?
I wonder if he has noticed that he is contradicting himself.
I am pretty sure he managed to get it immediately after I placed the order.

“Then, wouldn’t 5,100 have been fine?”
“N-Nope, because the competition wasn’t zero.”
“Will the next one cost the same?”
“It may take quite some time, though.”

There is that matter of buying the Damascus Steel Sword of Increased Attack from Luke after a few failures.
Luke will be the one troubled if it takes time.
As for me, I have already gotten one Bee Monster Card. The second one will only be a spare.

“Then, I would like the next one within 5,300, please.”
“Certainly.”

Because it was pathetic, I cut it down to 5,300.
Luke will deal with it himself.
If you don’t want to, don’t do it.

Chapter 177 - Progressive Increase in Damage

I leave the Merchant's Guild and return home.
While the dinner was being prepared, I have Sherry fuse the Bee Monster Card.

"Can't this be fused with an accessory?"
"A Bee Monster Card can be fused with an armor, too. If fused with an accessory or an armor, it grants the Progressive Decrease in Damage skill. It can reduce the damage if you receive a number of attacks from the same monster."
"I see. Then, is the spear better, after all?"

Progressive Increase in Damage is a skill which increases the damage of an attack.
If I attached it to an armor, it wouldn't 'up' (increase) it.

Sherry performs the Monster Card Fusion.
With neither complaint nor unease, Sherry grabs the Sacred Spear and the two monster cards *chacha* quickly.
She casually chants the skill incantation. The Monster Card Fusion succeeds effortlessly.

"It's done."
"Ooh, as you would expect."

What remains in Sherry's hands is a spear.

Sacred Spear of Increased Attack | Spear
Skills | Progressive Increase in Damage | Empty | Empty | Empty | Empty

It's a Sacred Spear of Increased Attack.
It possesses the Progressive Increase in Damage skill.
It's said to increase the magic damage, too, so it'll be handy.

However, the Sacred Spear of Increased Attack wasn't of as much

use as I thought.
Why?
Even though it was made with much effort.
When I went to the labyrinth with the Sacred Spear of Increased Attack the next morning, it didn't shorten the duration of battles.

So, is Progressive Increase in Damage not as effective as claimed?
That shouldn't be it.
Thus far, there hasn't been such a thing.

Or, is Sherry's knowledge perhaps lacking and it doesn't apply to magic?
That shouldn't be it either.
Sebastian recommended a Staff of Increased Attack.
At least, it puts off the doubt.

As for the reason, isn't it because the number of attacks required to take a monster out isn't much to begin with?
It takes 10 odd spells to finish a monster on the 26th floor off.
To reduce this number of spells by 1, the rate of increment has to be so much so that the power doubles at around 30th spell.
I'm not sure if the rate of increment of Progressive Increase in Damage is that high.

Let's assume that the number of attacks a person needs to take a monster out is 100.
If the power doubled after 30 attacks, how many attacks would they need to finish that monster off?

After 30 remains 70. With the power having doubled, it will at least get halved.
30 plus 35 gives 65.
Since the power will increase further in the latter half, they may even take it out in 60 or less attacks.

If they finished a monster, that requires 100 attacks to be taken out, off in 60 attacks, then Progressive Increase in Damage would indeed be a fairly useful skill.
Although the ease of its use is questionable, it's on par with the 2x Attack Power or 2x Intelligence skills.
If the number of attacks required were 150, 200, 300 or more,

Progressive Increase in Damage would probably exceed 2x Attack Power or 2x Intelligence.

Although the effect is more pronounced if attached to a strong weapon, it isn't rated highly in general. Does that perhaps mean the power doesn't get doubled even after 30 attacks?

Considering the power difference between Durandal and a Copper Sword, that I can't turn a Lv26 monster into smoke even with Durandal unless I attack quite a number of times, a person who needs to attack a 100 times shouldn't be uncommon.
Actually, I must say that I'm lucky.

I wonder if the rate at which Progressive Increase in Damage increases the power is slow.
If so, 10 odd spells won't be effective in reducing the number by 1.
So, as to why the Sacred Spear of Increased Attack didn't shorten the duration of battles, it must be because the time I take to finish the monsters off is already short.
Really short.

Or, the reason as to why Progressive Increase in Damage is popular amongst the Empire Liberation Society members is perhaps due to the fact that most of the members fight on higher floors where the number of attacks required to take the monsters out will naturally be high.
For instance, a monster that requires 200 attacks to be taken out can be taken out in 100 attacks with a Progressive Increase in Damage weapon. A person who can take the monster out in less than 200 attacks will rate 2x Attack Power or 2x Intelligence highly. However, a person who takes the monster out in more than 200 attacks will rate Progressive Increase in Damage higher than 2x Attack power or 2x Intelligence.
Commonly, people take on the monsters that can be taken out before Progressive Increase in Damage kicks in; therefore, they don't rate it highly. By the same token, the Empire Liberation Society members rate Progressive Increase in Damage highly because they attack the monsters until it shows its true effect.
For the Empire Liberation Society members, it may be normal to attack 200-300 times.

In how many attacks do the Empire Liberation Society members, who challenge higher floors, take the monsters out?
From that, the effect of Progressive Increase in Damage can be deduced.
Also, how many attacks does it take to reduce the number of attacks by one?
How many magic attacks will a monster need to be taken out for the Sacred Spear of Increased Attack to be of use?

Someone who's good at maths should be able to calculate it with ease.
It feels like a geometric series or an arithmetic series sum formula.
I should've learnt it diligently.
If we assume that the first attack inflicts 1 damage and the damage multiplies sequentially, we should be able to calculate the total damage inflicted by 'n' number of attacks using the formula.

I don't know, however, whether the damage increased by Progressive Increase in Damage follows an arithmetic series or a geometric series.
If the damage were to increase by 3% with every attack, it would be 1, 1.03, 1.06 in case of an arithmetic series.
If it were a geometric series, the power of the third attack would be 1.0609.

If it were a geometric series, the power would become unimaginable as the number of attacks grew.
That being the case, I wouldn't be able to compare the effects with the number of attacks being small.
In any case, the effect won't be apparent with 10 odd attacks.

The number of attacks required for Progressive Increase in Damage to kick in seems to be several times of mine.
Is that the reason as to why the Sacred Spear of Increased Attack was of no use?

However, magic remains a concern, too.
Another possibility is that Progressive Increase in Damage applies to a single target spell, not an area of effect spell.
This will perhaps not be that serious.

There shouldn't be any reason for it to not apply to an area of effect spell if it applies to a single target spell.

Another concern is whether it carries over with different spells or not.
This one will be a serious concern.
Other Wizards can cast only one spell.
So, there's a possibility for it to not work for just me.

I can cast three spells.
Grand Wizard's magic, the magic set as the skill of Jobless and Wizard's magic.
If I cast three spells, will Progressive Increase in Damage recognize second and third spells as second and third attacks?

Or, does it perhaps recognize fourth spell and fifth spell of Jobless as second attack?
At this rate, it'll be pretty difficult for the damage to increase.
Or, there's another possibility that Progressive Increase in Damage ceases to carry over every time the spell count resets.
If it's that, it'll be miserable.

"Umm, did the attached skill yield good results?"

Sherry enquires.
It's available to anyone with the eyes to see that the duration of battles didn't shorten.
You didn't have to ask.

Or, were you pointing it out?
She must be pointing it out.
Oh well. I understand, but.

"Ah, probably. The number of attacks is too small. If a monster isn't strong, it may not produce good results."

Therefore, it can't be helped.

"Is that so?"
"As expected of Master."

Even though I don't look remotely like Johnny Depp, Roxanne's

attitude is same as ever.
Anyways, I won't be able to check the Sacred Spear of Increased Attack until I reach higher floors.
Is it really impossible like I was afraid?

When the number of attacks using the Sacred Spear of Increased Attack decrease compared to the number of attacks using the Sacred Spear, only then will I be able to deduce the effect of Progressive Increase in Damage.
Therefore, I can't afford to not know the number of attacks using the Sacred Spear.
However, Progressive Increase in Damage has now been attached to the Sacred Spear.
Because I can't just switch it on/off, the experiment can no longer be proceeded with.
What do I do?
What should I have done?
Do I keep it at least?

"Roxanne, can you please guide us to a place with few monsters? Ideally, only a Gummi Slime. Or, one more monster with a Gummi Slime."
"A Gummi Slime? Understood."
"It doesn't need to be immediate. Keep that in mind, please."

I ask of Roxanne.
This being the 26th floor, there may no longer be lone monsters.
On the 1st floor, however, there were only lone monsters.
However, we should still be able to encounter two monsters occasionally.

"There's exactly one each."

Roxanne guides us to a group of a Gummi Slime and a Cape Carp.
So, a lone Gummi Slime is impossible, after all, huh?

"Thanks. Then, I'll be experimenting a bit on the enemy. I'll ask of you to hold the Gummi Slime back from the front, Roxanne, but don't attack it much."
"Okay."

Roxanne bolts.
I follow after without casting spells.

“Miria, Vesta, take only on the Cape Carp, don’t meddle with the Gummi Slime. Sherry, too, unless it fires a magic attack, you’ll be on the standby.”

With the exception of the sprinting Roxanne, I issue the instructions.
The three of them will mainly be taking on the Cape Carp.
The remaining Gummi Slime will be the experimental subject.

After Roxanne stands in front of the Gummi Slime, I shoot an Aquaball.
I attack just the Gummi Slime with the Aquaball.
Since Intermediate Fire Magic is currently set as the skill of Jobless, I can only shoot Grand Wizard’s Aquaball.

I have the option of attacking the Cape Carp with the magic of Jobless and Wizard but I decide against it.
Neither am I launching physical attacks using the spear.
The reason being, the modus operandi of Progressive Increase in Damage is not yet known.
If I attack only the Gummi slime with Grand Wizard’s single target spell, I believe that the effect of Progressive Increase in Damage will carry over.

If it still doesn’t carry over, then Progressive Increase in Damage doesn’t apply to magic contrary to the information. However, I don’t want to think that.
Although I used Grand Wizard’s single target spells occasionally, the number of magic attacks required to take the monsters out didn’t decrease; however, it may still be concluded that Progressive Increase in Damage increased the power of the spells by a fraction of a spell.

I might as well use Wizard’s Waterball; however, if I did that against the Cape Carp that’s resistant to Water magic, the number of attacks required to take it out would increase anyway.
For there’s no knowing as to what may happen inside the labyrinth, I’d better not lengthen the duration of the battle.

Besides, I don't attack a Cape Carp with Waterball in normal course.
I could count the number to an extent but it would contain errors.
I can't undertake a controlled experiment now that I don't have the Sacred Spear in my hands.
Using the Sacred Spear of Increased Attack, even if I obtain the results, there would be no point.

I attack only the Gummi Slime with only Aquaballs.
I diligently attack just one monster with single target spells.

"Did it, desu."

Even though Miria has petrified the Cape Carp, I only attack the Gummi Slime.
Miria and Vesta subsequently attack the petrified Cape Carp.
You don't have to particularly attack it.

Since there's no knowing as to what may happen inside the labyrinth, isn't it okay to inflict some damage?
However, when petrified, doesn't its defense power increase?
There's an option of handing Durandal to Vesta. Should I?

It can't be said with certainty that there's not even 1 in 10,000 chance of it affecting the results of the experiment.
So, I guess not.

Eventually, the Gummi Slime collapses in 11 Aquaballs.
This is more or less in line with the usual count.
Using the Sacred Spear of Increased Attack made no difference.
It may be concluded that Progressive Increase in Damage didn't decrease the number of attacks.

I pull Durandal out and finish the petrified Cape Carp off.
It has no relation whatsoever to using area of effect spells or using the magic of Jobless, Grand Wizard and Wizard simultaneously.
As before, the power doesn't seem to gain a fraction of a spell with 10 odd attacks.
Oh well. Nothing can be done about it.
That's probably how it is.

Since the skill is called Progressive Increase in Damage, the

damage should increase with the number of attacks.
If the power could gain a fraction of a spell after 10 odd attacks, what would happen at 101st attack?
On the contrary, if the power settled at as soon as 101st attack, the damage would gain a fraction of a spell a lot earlier.

If Luke the broker used the Damascus Steel Sword of Increased Attack himself, he would figure out that it's useful and revise his offer.
However, I'm not sure if a Damascus Steel Sword of Increased Attack will be of use on lower floors.
Since the monsters appearing on lower floors are few, all the members of a party can jointly knock them down.
Consequently, the number of attacks per person will be 1/6th.

If a total of 300 attacks are required, each person will attack 50 times which is not much for Progressive Increase in Damage to reduce.
Hence, it can be concluded that 2x Attack Power is more useful.
Regardless of public secrecy of the information, appreciating Progressive Increase in Damage is in the core of the Empire Liberation Society members.

"Was that so?"
"Did you understand what that was?"

Having comprehended, Sherry asks me.
An important part of the findings of an experiment is to discuss what was understood and what couldn't be.

Chapter 178 - Beef

In the end, I have no choice but to conclude that the Progressive Increase in Damage skill isn't efficacious if the number of attacks is insufficient.
However, since I don't know the details, there is nothing I can do about it.
A few days later, having still not figured anything out, I arrive at the boss room of Haruba's 26th floor.
There are only two doors, one in the front and one at the back. It's the waiting room.

"Waiting room, huh?"

If I proceed to the 27th floor in this state, I will be at an even more loss than I already am.
Or, the number of attacks may perhaps reduce when I go to the 27th floor.
Or so I think; however, the HP doesn't decrease sharply going from a Lv27 down to a Lv26 monster, so the reduction in the number of attacks cannot be absolute.

I cannot help but think of Progressive Increase in Damage showing effects already.
Now that it has come down to it, I should stop thinking.
Since I cannot see any effect, I cannot take it into consideration.

Thinking of not thinking…
Is called thinking.
(As per Diamond Wisdom Sutra)
I seem to have gotten one step closer to enlightenment.

"The Cape Carp boss is called the Curve Carp. Its weakness and resistance are same as a Cape Carp's. Its weakness is Fire magic. Because its magic is strong, I must prevent it from casting at all costs."

Sherry briefs as if talking to herself.

It is Sherry's duty to stop the boss completing the incantation.
Vesta will take care of the monsters accompanying the boss using Durandal.

Now that I think about it, I can come back to the 26th floor if I want to observe Progressive Increase in Damage.
Well, it isn't like I won't be able to figure out Progressive Increase in Damage if I am on the 27th floor.
It isn't like I would be forced to go to the next floor if I cleared the boss.
There shouldn't be any problem even if I clear the 26th floor.

Because the door to the boss room opened quickly, I get ready to enter.
I take out Durandal and hand it to Vesta. I add Seventh Job and select Gambler.
I enter the boss room. Smoke gathers in the center of the room as three monsters appear.

The two monsters accompanying the boss are a Gummi Slime and a Cape Carp.
I wait while Miria and Vesta take their positions.
Miria seems to be dealing with the Cape Carp.

When Miria was a Diver, she had the benefit of the Anti-aquatic Strengthening skill.
However, since Miria is no longer a Diver, she no longer has the advantage of Anti-aquatic Strengthening.
Still, it doesn't stop Miria from playing with her favorite – fish – huh?

It would actually have been better had Vesta, who has Durandal, taken care of the Cape Carp.
The chance of a Cape Carp using magic is higher than that of a Gummi Slime.
It would have let Sherry focus more on the boss.
If it is just this, it should be fine, no?

The Gummi Slime is unexpectedly a physical attack type monster.
It crashes and bites, and apparently has a chance to digest.
It is a little different from a physical attack, I think.
It is necessary to be careful of the Cape Carp's magic.

After shooting a barrage of three Fire spells, I cast Abnormal Status Resistance Down on the Cape Carp.
I hit the boss during the cooldown period of the spells using the Sacred Spear of Increased Attack.
Because I attached a skill to the Sacred Spear, the theory dictates that I should only use physical attacks. I will, of course, not bother.

The Curve Carp is a common carp with a large curved body.
It is curved like a crescent moon, its head looking at its tail.
Although curved, it doesn't seem to be doing that as a maneuver to get out the line of magic. Its body really is curved.

Can it really attack with its head facing its back?
While I was thinking that, it tries to squeeze Roxanne with its belly.
It is nimble.
Roxanne evades it using her Rapier and shield.

A blue magic formation floats under the curved body of the parried Curve Carp.
Sherry rushes and thrusts her spear to cancel the magic.
Since it isn't good at physical attacks, we need to watch out for its magic, huh?
No need to worry about its magic, though, for we have Sherry to leave it to.

"Did it, desu."

Furthermore, Miria successfully petrifies the Cape Carp.
With this, there is next to no chance for us to be defeated.
Should I attack with only the Sacred Spear of Increased Attack now? Is what I thought for a moment but I decide not to do that either.
There is no benefit for me in doing that.

Usually, inside the labyrinth, new monsters may join if a battle prolongs.
You would be in big trouble if you were caught between two groups of monsters.
This is one of the patterns (ways) of losing your life inside the labyrinth.

However, inside the boss room, no new monster comes out normally. (There seem to be monsters that can summon other monsters.)
I can engage in a drawn out battle even against a small number of monsters unless my stamina runs out.
Progressive Increase in Damage will definitely shine in the boss battles.

However, even if I defeat this boss with the the Sacred Spear of Increased Attack, I don't have anything to compare it with.
Hence, I abandon the stupid idea of attacking it with only the Sacred Spear of Increased Attack and apply Abnormal Status Resistance Down on the Curve Carp.
As for the boss, Miria easily petrifies it.

At almost the same time as the Curve Carp getting petrified, the Gummi Slime turns into smoke.
It wasn't Vesta's Durandal but my magic that finished the Gummi Slime.
Did the power somewhat increase because of Progressive Increase in Damage?
I'm thinking of such things again. Regrettable.

I have no choice but to abandon judging what I don't understand.
I have no choice but keep silence on stuff I can't talk about.

"The monster native to Haruba's 27th floor is Moloch Taurus."

While I was tidying the boss up with Durandal, Sherry informs.

"Moloch Taurus?"

Going by its name, it seems strong.
I don't understand it well but it sounds cool.

"Although it can use magic, it basically is a power fighter. It seems to take pride in its ramming attack, so be very careful. It seems to be resistant to Fire which makes Water its weakness."
"The exact opposite of a Cape Carp, huh?"
"It seems so. It is perhaps better for you to use Lightning magic."
"Right."

A Cape Carp has resistance against Water magic and weakness

toward Fire magic.
A Moloch Taurus is the exact opposite of it.
The monster that will appear the most on Haruba's 27th floor after the Moloch Taurus is the Cape Carp.
It is troublesome for the weak and the resistant attributes to be inversely related.

If I used [Aqua Storm] to defeat the Moloch Taurus, then I will need more time to defeat the Cape Carp; if I used [Burn Storm] to defeat the Cape Carp, then I will need more time to defeat the Moloch Taurus.
Like Sherry said, it is better for me to use Lightning magic here.
Should I set Basic Lightning Magic as the skill of Jobless?
I set the skill and move on to the 27th floor.

"This way."

We advance under Roxanne's guidance.
The first group we come across comprises two Moloch Tauruses.
I cast a barrage of three spells — [Aqua Storm」, [Thunder Storm] and [Water Storm].
Water magic is effective against the two Moloch Tauruses but I can't change the skill of Jobless now to match the opponent.

The Moloch Taurus is a monster with a cow's head.
In other words, it is a cowman. Or, maybe a cow that walks on two feet?
Since it is a cow, two horns are growing on its head. It also has a sturdy body.
However, even with that, it doesn't look scary.

Because it has black and white mottles.
Black and white mottles.
Is the Moloch Taurus a Holstein species?
It shouldn't be strange for it is a cow. Actually, shouldn't it be strange for it is a cowman with black and white mottles?

Although it has a scary face, its two tone color is strangely charming.
I will, of course, shoot it with magic without mercy.
Roxanne and the girls close in on the Moloch Tauruses without them

getting paralyzed.
Because I only shot one Lightning magic, it is understandable as to why they didn't get paralyzed.

Roxanne and Vesta take positions in front of the cowmen while Miria attacks from the side.
Oh.
The monster's movement has stopped after Miria's first attack.

"Did it, desu."

And what's more, it seems to be petrifaction.
Miria's attack is more efficient than my Lightning magic.
Since her Job is Assassin, it can't be helped.

The four girls encircle the remaining one.
I catch up and thrust my spear in.
With it surrounded by all the members, it should be an easy win, right?

So I thought but the Moloch Taurus steps forward.
One step, two steps; its walking pace turned into lightning fast speed.
Gaining control of over its stern body, it strikes.

It is a speed that can be classified as teleportation.
Or, does it look faster due to the hypnotic effect induced by the black and white mottles?
Can it even hypnotize using the black and white mottles?

Can hypnotism and super speed be shabby? Never!
I don't know what I'm saying but its attack seems terrifying.

Roxanne lightly takes half a step back.
She dodges the cowman's charge by a hair's breadth.
Could it be dodged?
Furthermore, the Moloch Taurus stretches its arms out; however, Roxanne knocks them with her Rapier.

Miria launches a delayed attack.
The cowman's movement ceases.
It seems to have been paralyzed.

Before the paralysis could wear off, I try to deliver the killing blow with magic.
Following the petrified Moloch Taurus, the paralyzed one turns into smoke.
Whether Progressive Increase in Damage worked or not, I have no idea since there is no data to compare with.

“Was that the ramming attack? It was terrifying.”

In spite of the black and white mottles.
It was on a higher level for a ramming attack.

“You are right. It may be a bit dangerous to look away even for a moment.”

But it would be dangerous just as well even if you looked at it.
We have someone more terrifying here.
Well, as far as Sherry and I are concerned, we can attack from a distance.

We exchange glances to console each other.

“Watch carefully, desu.”

Can you deal with it if you watch it carefully?

“I don’t think it is that strong since we can just collide and be done with it.”

Vesta is terrifying, too.
Vesta is even bigger than the cowman.
The shock from the collision may perhaps not be that strong for her.

Even if it were a cow woman, Vesta would be bigger.
In which sense, I cannot say.
Even though I didn’t say it, I can feel Sherry’s cold stare. It must be my imagination.

Without looking at Sherry, I watch the monster vanish.
When the Moloch Taurus turns into smoke and dissipates, there was red meat left.
It is boned rib.

It was showing as boned rib when I use Appraisal.

I have bought it from a butcher shop before.
Is this boned rib cow meat or cowman meat?
Can cowman meat be called beef?
Since it is a monster we are talking about, delving into it is useless.

Like goat meat? Pork boned rib meat? Or white fish? I have already gotten used to the monster drops.
Even though it is somewhat humanoid, it is still a monster, after all.
Moreover, there is no blood dripping off it since it is a drop item.
Let's get this tasty stuff.

"Even though a cow doesn't leave meat behind, a cowman does?"
"Yes, desu."

I receive the boned rib and put it inside my Item Box.

"Does a Moloch Taurus drop any other ingredient?"
"A triangular boned rib. It seems literally to be a rare drop. People say that it doesn't exist as it has never been left behind."

Sherry replies to my question.
There seems to be a rare ingredient, too.
Triangular boned rib, eh?
It is a superior rib.

Thereafter, we continued to explore the 27th floor; however, a triangular boned rib never dropped.
It does seem to be an extremely rare item.
As for fighting a Moloch Taurus, whether it is due to Progressive Increase in Damage or not, I can do it.

"Does a triangular boned rib really exist?"
"It is supposed to. However, it is difficult to differentiate by appearance."
"It is?"
"Even butchers refrain from buying triangular boned ribs to avoid troubles which makes more and more people believe that it doesn't exist."

Sherry teaches me.

That’s a vicious cycle.
People won’t quite believe unless they see it with their own eyes.
If they cannot recognize it by appearance, will they believe whether it is truly a triangular boned rib or not?

Like I still cannot trust the effect of Progressive Increase in Damage.
So, I cannot comment on people.
Although people know that alcohol and cigarette are bad for health, they still consume those.
The poison contained in cigarette and alcohol is indiscernible. Its continuous use damages the body over a long period of time.

I don’t know whether the people of this world realize the risks of alcohol and tobacco.
As for Sherry, she doesn’t think that liquor is harmful for a dwarf’s body.
Unless she notices chronic effect, she won’t believe me.
Honestly, whether liquor is bad for a dwarf’s body or not, I don’t really know.

When I bought wine for cooking, I asked Sherry twice if she wants liquor but she refused saying that it isn’t necessary.
Because I don’t understand what kind of effect liquor has on a dwarf’s body, I cannot recommend it much.
It isn’t my concern if the person themselves want to drink but I cannot force them to drink.

As far as triangular boned rib is concerned, since I can use Appraisal, I should be able to tell.
Even though I don’t have spare points to select Cook, it should drop sooner or later.

Chapter 179 - Labyrinth Subjugation

We break through 26th floor of Quratar's labyrinth.
The monster native to Quratar's 27th floor is Scissor Lizard.
That and the monster of the 26th floor, Cape Carp, I have already fought in Haruba's labyrinth before, so there shouldn't be any problem.

A Cape Carp is weak against Fire magic which a Scissor Lizard is resistant to; however, since I won't be staying in Quratar's labyrinth for too long, it is fine.
In any and all cases, the conditions aren't as severe as Haruba's 27th floor.
After fighting a few times on Quratar's 27th floor, we immediately move to Haruba's.

I will mainly be using Lightning magic on Haruba's 27th floor similar to Quratar's 27th floor.
2 Moloch Tauruses and 3 Cape Carps show up. With this combination, [Thunder Storm] will be the most effective.
That there are 5 enemies, at least one of them will get paralyzed within the first two spells.

On the group of 3 cowmen and 2 carps, I pour [Thunder Storm], [Thunder Storm]and [Fire Storm]. Luckily, 3 of them have gotten paralyzed this time.
For Wizard, I have decided to use Fire magic.
Although the Moloch Tauruses have Fire resistance, my experience tells me that it is better to defeat the monsters in order when there is a large number of them.
It would perhaps have been more effective; however, based on the results of paralysis and petrifaction, I will change my pattern.

"Did it, desu."

One of the remaining two gets paralyzed with the next [Thunder

Storm] while Miria petrifies the remaining one.
With this, the battle has come to an end.
Well, there is a chance for paralysis to naturally wear off; however, all of them eventually die without anyone regaining consciousness.

“Next, we will continue straight from here. There may be a small number of monsters, though.”

We resume exploration under Roxanne’s guidance.
I ask Roxanne if it is possible for her to guide us to a place with a lot of monsters.
It isn’t convenient, however, since I gave priority to exploring.

Two Moloch Tauruses appear next.
I cast a barrage of [Aqua Storm], [Thunder Storm] and [Water Storm]. This time, however, only one of them gets paralyzed.
What’s with that!
The fewer the number of monsters, the more troublesome it seems to get.

Actually, the degree of difficulty doesn’t increase when there is a fewer number.
The problem is the efficiency.
Call it labor, call it cost performance or call it balance of return; the larger the number of monsters, the better.
It feels so good when so many monsters stop moving.

In extreme case, a barrage of 3 against 5 monsters will paralyze 3.
It is the same as a barrage of 3 against 2 monsters paralyzing 1.
It can recover from paralysis. I can finish it off faster with Grand Wizard’s [Aqua Storm], so it isn’t completely same.

“Did it, desu.”

Out of the two, one gets petrified.
It would be nice if the remaining one got paralyzed; however, it is extremely difficult.
If there were five, one won’t matter; however, that there is just one, it will be hard.

“Here it comes.”

Before it could get paralyzed, Roxanne issues a warning.
There was nothing like a magic formation under the cowman's feet.
The Moloch Taurus suddenly charges.
It is a ramming attack.

Was the warning for this?
She really grasped it well.
Roxanne pulls back half a step and dodges the cowman's ram.
She's reliable.

After its ramming attack was over, everyone concentrates their attacks on the stupid black and white mottled cow.
I thrust my spear in, too.

"Did it, desu."

Miria seems to have inflicted petrifaction once again.
There is a merit even in a fewer number.
When there are 5 of them, it is nearly impossible to petrify all of them.
It is usually over by the time Miria petrifies 2-3.

Since both of them have been petrified, it is Durandal's turn.
I add Seventh Job and select cook.
With Durandal, I finish the Moloch Tauruses off.
The monsters turn into smoke and dissipate.

Oh, a triangular boned rib!
When the smoke vanishes, there was a triangular boned rib left behind by the last Moloch Taurus.
Finally, huh?
It is the first time dropping after all the Moloch Tauruses I have hunted thus far.

"Yes, desu."

Miria brings the boned rib dropped by the first Moloch Taurus over.

"Please."

Vesta picks up the triangular boned rib.
So, this is a triangular boned rib, huh?

It looks no different from a normal boned rib.
It is merely a piece of meat.

I kinda understand the reason as to why the butchers tend to be reluctant to buy it to avoid the troubles.
I can differentiate it, though, because I have [Appraisal].
However, even if I said that this is a triangular boned rib, how would I explain if I were asked?
What would I do?

“Is that possibly a triangular boned rib?”

While I was a little puzzled, Sherry asks me.
Is Sherry able to tell that it is a triangular boned rib?

“You can tell?”
“Nope. Well, if it is a triangular boned rib, it shouldn’t be able to be put in the same space as a boned rib in the Item Box.”

I see.
Is that how you can tell them apart?
Same items can be put in the same space in the Item Box. Different items cannot be.
A boned rib and a triangular boned rib should consistently be treated as different items.

Sure enough, the triangular boned rib occupies a different row from the boned rib when I put it inside.
It occupies a new row where there was no item.

“Oh, so it was like that, huh?”

Oh shit!
I should have said from the beginning that it was a triangular boned rib.
It could have added to the appeal of my intelligence.

Nah. Although it could add to the appeal of my intelligence…
I don’t have to disguise myself as having a good head.
I am smart without having to disguise myself as one.
Probably.

Sherry saw me puzzled as I was hesitating while putting it inside my Item Box.
In Sherry's eyes, I must have looked like an idiot who didn't notice that it was a triangular boned rib.
Her eyes look a little cold.
I hope it is my imagination.

Damn!
It is so annoying. However…

With the Item Box, the butchers should be able to deal in it.
But not all customers have the Item Box. So, it really is futile, huh?
They cannot deal in something limited to Explorers and Adventurers.
Even with the Item Box, if they don't have a boned rib, it won't work.

By the end of the day, I only got one triangular boned rib.
I attached Cook several times and defeated the Moloch Tauruses; however, it still didn't appear again.
A triangular boned rib seems to be rare even amongst the rare ingredients.
It should rather be called a premium ingredient.

The next day, for the dinner, I roast the triangular boned rib simply with salt and pepper.
I don't know how to make Kalbi sauce. Even if I knew, I wouldn't find the ingredients.
Although I roasted it merely with salt and pepper, the triangular boned rib is surely delicious.
Is this a premium ingredient, after all?

"Thank you for this delicious food."
"Certainly, a normal boned rib cannot even compare to it."

Roxanne and Sherry like it.

"Delicious, desu."
"It is triangular boned rib."
"Triangular boned rib, desu."

Did you like it as much as the last night's whole fish for the floor breakthrough celebration?

Oh well. She will forget it since it isn't a fish.

"Is it alright for me to be allowed this kind of luxury?"
"Because it doesn't seem to drop much, it may only be for today."

Vesta likes it; however, there is no more premium ingredient left.
Thereafter, I fought for several days on Haruba's 27th floor but I haven't received even one triangular boned rib.
If I always select Cook and use Durandal to kill the Moloch Tauruses when they get petrified, will I be able to get one someday?

It might be different if I always had Cook on; however, it will be difficult.
There are other skills that I want to spend the bonus points on.
I could temporarily select Cook for one full day; however, getting one per day would be worthless.
Assuming I want to eat one everyday.

Also, I will lose the chance to eat it when I move on to the next floor.
Luxury is an enemy.

"Triangular boned rib, desu."

Miria picks up the triangular boned rib and brings it over.
With this, we 3 have in total.
Triangular boned rib hardly ever drops, really.

"You really can tell if it is a triangular boned rib or not."
"Different color, desu."
"So, it was like that, huh?"

I receive the triangular boned rib and put it inside my Item Box.
Miria seems to be able to tell the difference between a boned rib and a triangular boned rib.
I will never be able to understand the difference.
Honestly, I would like someone who understands the difference between a boned rib and a triangular boned rib to teach me who can differentiate via Appraisal.

I thought Miria wouldn't remember the word triangle boned rib but she actually did. It is unbelievable.
It shows as to how much she liked the triangular boned rib.

I want to give her a choice: which one would she like to eat more? This or the fatty tuna?

“Because I heard that it is really difficult for a triangular boned rib to drop, I thought there would be fewer yet we got this many. It really is great.”

Sherry is not directing her white eyes at me, so it can be considered a good thing, I guess.
Which reminds me, all the triangle boned ribs dropped when I had Cook on and Durandal equipped.
It might not have dropped had I not have Cook selected.

“It is naturally because of Master. As expected of Master.”

Roxanne trusts heavily.

“Really? I think you are amazing.”

Vesta’s trust, in comparison, is light.

“Th-Then, let’s go to the next one?”
“Uhh, I am sorry.”

Roxanne apologizes when I said that we should quickly get back to hunting.

“What?”
“I have lost the monsters.”
“Lost?”
“Yes, their positions and numbers.”

Roxanne seems confused herself.
Is such a thing even possible?
It is the first time she is at a loss.
Is it the sign of a powerful monster appearing?

“Ah, the labyrinth may have been subjugated.”

Sherry informs us.

“Subjugated? Speaking of subjugation, what happens when a labyrinth gets subjugated?”

“When the last boss of a labyrinth has been defeated, no new monsters spawn. The monsters that aren’t engaged in battles seem to disappear. The labyrinth itself seems to stay in the same state without monsters for several days. During that period of time, it is possible for you to come out but you cannot go back in. When you use [Dungeon Walk], you return to the entrance no matter where you try to go to.”

When a labyrinth has been subjugated, it doesn’t seem to disappear all of a sudden.
I wonder what would happen to the people inside if it were to disappear suddenly.
The labyrinth remains for several days but the monsters don’t spawn.
That’s why Roxanne wasn’t able to detect them.

“Really? Should we move to the first small room with [Dungeons Walk]?”
“Yes.”

I select Explorer, which I no longer use, and invoke [Dungeon Walk].
After a while, the black wall of [Dungeon Walk] manifests.
However, it feels like there is a bug in the movement.
Is it okay?

“Dungeon Walk surely is acting funny.”
“Because Dungeon Walk of all the parties is leading to the same exit, I think it is taking some time.”
“Is that so?”

I am convinced by Sherry’s explanation.
So, there is no problem, is there?
Oh well. Not going isn’t an option anyway
We will be able leave the labyrinth soon.

Over time, the movement of Dungeon Walk should stabilize as well.
I don’t know when will it happen, though. Also, there is even a possibility of it getting worse.
As per my observation, the movement magic itself is behaving suspiciously.

I'd better not use [Warp].
If the labyrinth has been subjugated, I won't be able to go back in once I come out.

I resolve myself and step into the black wall.
After a moment's lag, I appear outside in the forest.
It is the corner of the forest where Haruba's labyrinth is located in.

What Sherry said seems to be true.
The entrance to the labyrinth seems to still be there.
The four girls come out following me.
In the vicinity of the entrance to the labyrinth, there seem to be some people.

"Michio-dono."

Gozer is here, too, and he calls out to me.

"By any chance, did Gozer-dono get the last boss?"
"It was merely a young labyrinth with fifty floors. I couldn't be defeated by it."

Gozer seems to be the one who subjugated the labyrinth.
As you would expect from the most elite party of the order of Harz knights.

"That's great. Congratulations."
"No, no. it is also thanks to Michio-dono's support."

I am glad I was able to be here just in time for the labyrinth's subjugation.
Had I not come out after a long time, 'Where is he? What is he doing?' would have happened
I am glad I didn't use [Warp].

"This labyrinth has been subjugated successfully by the order of Harz knights. Thank you for your cooperation, everyone."

They are probably Gozer's party members.
They greet the people who came out behind us.

"Two labyrinths are still left within our territory; we shouldn't lose

focus.”
“Ah- oh well.”

Is it possible to get the instruction as to which one of the two should I go to?
I wonder which one of the two I should enter from now on.
Which one should I go to?

“I cannot recommend any one of the remaining two to Michio-dono. Since there are only two, we will somehow be able to manage with just us knights.”
“Ah, you are right.”
“In order for the Duke to enter this labyrinth, we cleared every room with the monsters on every floor. In these parts, Tare’s labyrinth is the only one remaining. Bode’s labyrinth is scheduled to be cleared next; however, the exploration there isn’t progressing.”

One of the most dreadful things about a labyrinth is the small room brimming with monsters.
Since it was the labyrinth the Duke entered, the order of knights would definitely eradicate these dangers.
As it turns out, I seem to have been entering a safe labyrinth unbeknownst.

Chapter 180 - Progress Management

“Gozer, you seem to have done it.”

The Duke comes out of the labyrinth.
Cassia is in his party.
If Cassia were going to enter, you would have to make the labyrinth safe and clear all the monster filled rooms.
However, if the Duke were going in on his own, you could just leave him to rot somewhere.

“Ha, thank you very much.”
“Oh, Michio-dono was inside, too?”
“Yes.”
“You came out quicker even though my party hadn’t advanced deep inside.”

The Duke stands in front, blocking me from seeing Cassia.
You are in the way, Duke.

Now that I think about it, I used [Dungeon Walk] to get out of the labyrinth quickly.
However, I shouldn’t be able to use [Dungeon Walk] if I am truly an Adventurer.
The parties without an Explorer have to walk to the entrance in order to come out.

“I was coincidentally nearby.”

Well, Sherry can be thought of as an Explorer, too.
I am concerned about something else.
There is an Explorer who stands outside the labyrinth by the entrance.
Because I entered the labyrinth directly via [Warp], the Explorer, who stands by the entrance to the labyrinth, didn’t see us enter.

Well, it isn’t like he keeps watch 24 hours, so I should be able to

manage it, somehow.
He cannot be here in the evening, surely.
A little worried, I look around but I don't know as to which one is the entrance Explorer and which one is the guide Explorer.

He is perhaps no longer here.
Now that the labyrinth has been subjugated, there is no need for the Explorer to guide through the labyrinth.
His foremost task should be to go back to the Explorer's Guild and report.
There is no need to be worried about unnecessary stuff in front of the Duke, is there?

"You have done us a favor, Michio-dono. You have our thanks."
"Not at all."
"If possible, I would like you to enter the labyrinths in this territory from now on."
"We have already talked about it. Michio-dono should enter a labyrinth of his choice."

Gozer stops the Duke from speaking his mind.
As expected of Gozer.

"Is that so? Well, that's fine."
"It will be more convenient for your Excellency this way."

I wonder as to how it will be more convenient for the Duke.
Am I a pig that you are pasturing?
Are you going to eat me after I get fat?

"Nope, it is something else. I would like Michio-dono to become a noble as soon as possible."

The Duke explains.
He hopes that I will become a noble this way.
He said the same thing back when he recommended me to the Empire Liberation Society.

I don't get as to what merit the Duke has in my becoming a noble.
Doesn't he have more allies?
Besides, troubles annoy me.

“Can I even reach that high?”
“Well, I am not saying right now. Then, look forward to the dinner.”

When I inquire further about nobility, the Duke interrupts, pretending to not have heard it.
The Duke invited me to celebrate my enrollment in the Empire Liberation Society.
I have no choice but to hope for Gozer’s intervention.

“Then, I will be in your care.”

I turn toward Gozer and greet.

“Oh well. You won’t be asked of anything too unreasonable.”

I wonder if it is Gozer giving up.

“I will be in your care.”

I press Gozer, reminding him again.

“W-Well.”
“Then, I am returning this emblem. I will be in your care”
“I-I will keep it safe.”

I deem it acceptable since Gozer has nodded.
I take out the emblem of the order of Harz Duchy knights, which I was keeping in my rucksack, and hand it to Gozer.
It isn’t necessary anymore as I don’t have to enter the labyrinths in the territory of Harz Duchy.

I return the emblem and leave.
I return home at once.

“Sherry was right; the labyrinth was exterminated.”
“That’s right. As expected of Sherry.”
“Not at all.”

Everyone surrounds the table.
And takes their seat.

“Then, the problem is, what to do from now on.”
“True.”

“For the time being, is it fine to enter Quratar’s labyrinth?”

Since we have lost Haruba’s labyrinth, it having been subjugated, we need to think of where to go next.
We don’t have the option of not entering the labyrinth.
Considering security, money and other such things.
I have settled in this world, after all.

As for the labyrinths under consideration, the very first one should be Quratar’s labyrinth.
Above all, it is close by, safe and I have already entered it.
Not to mention, I have already cleared the 26th floor.

In Haruba’s Labyrinth, they diligently cleared the monster filled rooms for the Duke to enter.
I would like the next labyrinth to be so, too.
Safety comes first.

In the future, I will have to deal with the monster filled rooms; however, I will think about it when the time comes.
For now, I prefer leveling up and acquire new skills ‘safely’.

Quratar’s labyrinth is convenient.
Monsters don’t seem to accumulate there because a lot people frequent that labyrinth.
However, because there are too many people, I can’t consider Quratar’s labyrinth as our main hunting ground. That shouldn’t be problem, though, at the 27th floor.
The more we move up to higher floors, the less the people.

“Yes, I think it will be better.”
“As first option, it will be best to go to Quratar’s labyrinth.”
“Yes, desu.”
“I think it will be alright.”

The four girls seem to be fine with it.
And it doesn’t look like Sherry is going to suggest another labyrinth.

“Then, in Quratar’s labyrinth, I intend to move up a floor every 2 days.”
“Every 2 days…?”

However, there is an issue in case of Quratar's labyrinth.
There is a guiding map laid out for Quratar's labyrinth.
If I feel like it, I can move up to as high a floor as I like.
Moving rapidly up, if I got caught in the moment, there would be a risk of falling into a precarious situation.

I must move up to higher floors cautiously.
In order to make Haruba's labyrinth our main hunting ground, we explored Haruba's labyrinth and moved up the floors slowly.
Having said that, I think I am worrying too much about our current situation.

Thus far, I have never had any difficult battle.
That I haven't obtain any benefit from the painstakingly attached Progressive Increase in Damage skill, it is probably due to advancing too cautiously.
Our party should be able to fight on higher floors.
But how do I confirm that?

"After we have fought for two days, let's discuss whether it will be fine to move up or not."

After a certain number of battles, I will have no choice but to discuss and take a decision.
It would be too anxious to decide after observing the situation for a day.
What if all went smooth on the first day?

And three days would be too long to observe our situation.
I can confirm it to some extent in a day.
After observing for one full day, the second day should be enough to decide, no?

"I don't think two days are needed, though."

In my opinion, Roxanne's opinion is aggressive, so I cannot rely on it.

"I won't suggest us to advance everyday and subject ourselves to continuous strain."
"Is that so?"
"I agree. Two days will be fine, I think."

I can rely on composed Sherry.

“Sherry thinks so, too? Then, I will rely on you.”
“Okay.”
“You need to notify by all means if you feel even slightly uneasy. First, we have to advance safely. You needn’t hesitate, thinking that you would be slowing us down. Rather, you should feel proud that you warned us of the danger beforehand.”
“Understood.”

If everyone is doing fine and you are the only one feeling uneasy, you will find it difficult to say it because it will look like you are holding others back.
I make it clear so that it doesn’t happen.

“Because there is a guiding map for Quratar’s labyrinth, we will probably not celebrate breaking through a floor; however, since we will be eating fish regularly from now on, rest assured.”
“Okay, desu.”

We can have a whole fish every time we move up a floor in Quratar’s labyrinth; however, if I said that, Miria wouldn’t feel motivated to advance.
I’d better get rid of all the concerns.

“I will be relying on Vesta.”
“Yes. I think it will be alright.”

But I cannot rely on Vesta too much, can I?
The attacks from the monsters will get stronger, too, but Vesta will never say that herself.
That’s what I feel after observing her thus far.

“Is Roxanne fine with it, too?”
“Yes, I understand.”
“Then, shall we go to Quratar’s 27th floor?”

After I explain the basic policy, we move to Quratar’s labyrinth.

“There don’t seem to be many people here. It should be fine even if we don’t head too deep in.”

Roxanne informs me once we appear at the entrance to the 27th floor.
Like I thought, there don't seem to be many people on the 27th floor even in the daytime.
With this, Quratar's labyrinth should be fine.

That day and the next day, we fought on Quratar's 27th floor.
Originally, we were on Haruba's 27th floor.
So, there was no problem even with Quratar's 27th floor.

"Does it look alright to move up to the next floor?"

I try to ask at the second day's dinner.
It is still not two full days since we moved from Haruba on the first day; still, it should be enough.

"Of course, with Master and us, there won't be any problem."

Of course, I knew you would say that, Roxanne.
I knew it already.

"I don't think there is any problem with the current level."
"Yes, desu."
"I think it will be alright."

As expected, prudence policy isn't an option.

"Then, tomorrow morning, let's move up to 28th floor."

If Haruba's labyrinth weren't exterminated, it wouldn't be surprising if we found the boss room of the 27th floor by now.
So, there is no problem with proceeding to the 28th floor.

The next morning, we grab the map, enter Quratar's labyrinth and break through the 27th floor.
We battled against the Scissor Lizard boss, Mother Lizard. It was an easy victory.
Thanks to it being early morning, we didn't have to wait to enter the boss room.

"The monster native to Quratar's 28th floor is Cyclops."
"If I remember correctly, its weakness is Wind magic?"

“Correct.”

Cyclops, huh?
Because I have been entering two labyrinths till now, I have managed to fight a variety of monsters on lower floors.
It would be impossible if I only entered Quratar’s labyrinth.
I would have to reach the 33rd floor to fight 33 different monsters.

Actually, wasn’t Quratar’s 33rd floor monster the Drive Dragon?
Then, what about the 44th floor monster?
Nah, it is different.
Because the bosses prior to 34th floor appear as monsters on the subsequent floors, the 44th floor monster will be the White Caterpillar of 11th floor.

Won’t it be a problem?
I will have to fight against the boss after moving through the floor.
Oh well. This much cannot be avoided.

“Since we will be entering just one labyrinth, will it be fine to partake in the boss battle twice?”

I ask for their opinion if it will be fine to fight the boss twice to gain more experience.
If we are going to hit a wall while moving up a floor, it will most likely be the boss battle.
Whether it would be fine fighting the boss of a higher floor or not, we’d better judge it carefully.

“Yes, that’s a good idea.”

Roxanna would say so.
I knew it already.

“Really?”
“Isn’t it be better to just retake the boss battles rather than observing the situation for two days?”

That’s unreasonable.
Is what I thought but it is an amazing suggestion.
Exploring, reaching the boss room, defeating the boss, moving up to the next floor; it is a method valid only if you don’t have a guiding

map.
I am reluctant to use this method.

There is a guiding map in case of Quratar's labyrinth.
There is no reason for me to use the same method as when I don't know the location of the boss room.
If it is just about deciding whether to move up the floor or not, isn't it better to retake the boss battles like Roxanne said?

But there is a practical problem. We will get less experience since I bring Durandal out in the boss battles.
So, how should I decline it?

"Ah, umm"
"You are right. That was a blind spot. What you said would indeed be better."

Sherry is still supportive.
I guess it will be so if you look at it objectively.

"Yes, desu."
"I think it will be alright."

These two girls are totally useless.

"Isn't it only the boss battle that is difficult?"
"You cannot say that nothing unexpected will happen in the labyrinth at all. It isn't only the boss battle that matters."
"If you find the boss battle difficult, then you can expect the next floor to be difficult, too. Isn't it better to make the call earlier?"

Roxanne and Sherry argue.
I see.
So, the reasoning behind retaking the boss battle is to catch early warning signs?
She has convinced me.

"Understood. During the boss battles, I always hand the sword to Vesta. If we can fight adequately without it, we will retake the boss battles."
"Yes, there will be no problem, of course."
"Does that mean we will be fighting with normal equipment? That

sounds good, too.”

Roxanne is confident. Albeit puzzled, Sherry nods her head, too.
It is inevitable.
So, let’s try it.
I wonder as to how it will turn out.

Chapter 181 - Dinner Party

We will retake the boss battles in Quratar's labyrinth without Durandal.
It will help us know our limits ahead of time. It won't be bad that way.
Besides, I can save time if I retake the 27th floor boss battle for two days from today.
All's grist that comes to the mill.[1]

"Are there any monsters nearby, Roxanne? We will fight if they are close; if not, let's go back to a lower floor."
"This way."

There are.
I try fighting Lv28 monsters.
I launch Wind and Lighting magic on three Cyclopes and defeat them.
There doesn't seem to be any problem.

"Because I will only be using magic during the battles, let's try the 23rd floor boss battle."

If I am to partake only in the boss battles, I cannot bring Durandal out.
Because I will be fighting without Durandal, it will be better to try it on a lower floor.
The number of monsters accompanying the boss increases after the 23rd floor.

"Understood."

Roxanne obediently complies.
We move to the 23rd floor and head to the boss room.
En route, we kick the monsters away without any problem and arrive at the waiting room.
After getting ready, we enter.

Thus far, during the boss battles, I have been using Durandal as well

as up to Seven Jobs.
Managing bonus points after adding Seventh Job was, as you would expect, difficult; however, I was able to make do, somehow.
Because the notion of not using Gambler was scary, I removed Wizard.

Between Gambler and Wizard, I chose Gambler as it was more useful in the boss battles.
It would be great if the boss could be neutralized via petrifaction.
Although the duration of a battle would lengthen to some extent if I removed Wizard, the chance of petrifaction would increase if the battle were to prolong.

“I will rely on Sherry for Incantation Interruption. Miria, take on the free monster.”
“Okay, desu.”
“It will be fine if you initially take on only one monster.”

A Jelly Slime, a Gummi Slime and a Clamshell appear. I cast Lighting magic and Wind magic on the three.
As for the skill of Jobless, I didn’t have time to change it, so I left it as Basic Lightning Magic.
I decide against using Earth magic, which the Clamshell is weak against, as it will be ineffective against the other two.

Miria thrusts into the Gummi Slime.
Between the Clamshell and the Gummi Slime, I would prefer if the Gummi Slime were to get petrified first; therefore, her choice is correct.
I am not sure, though, if she thought it that far.

If the Clamshell were to get petrified successfully, the strategy would be to leave the petrified Clamshell and move immediately to the boss.
Since she wouldn’t understand, I didn’t instruct her. Miria is allowed to do as she likes.
Roxanne hasn’t issued any instructions either.

Miria strikes before I could even cast Abnormal Status Resistance Down.
So, there would be such an issue if I let her charge without waiting,

huh?
I have failed.
Since I can use Lightning magic, it would perhaps have been better had I started with Abnormal Status Resistance Down.

“Did it, desu.”

After I cast Abnormal Status Resistance Down, Miria petrifies the Gummi Slime with the second strike.
I apply Abnormal Status Resistance Down on the boss.
Thanks to its resistance having fallen, the boss gets paralyzed by my Lighting magic.
With the boss no longer able to move, Miria petrifies the remaining Clamshell with ease.

“Err, somehow, it was easy.”

I tidy up the three petrified monsters.

“Since we have been fighting on higher floors, this much is to be expected.”
“You are right, I guess.”
“But it hasn’t been that long since we cleared the 23rd floor.”

After I approve of Roxanne’s opinion, Sherry questions.
The effect of Gained Experience 20x, perhaps?
But how?
I don’t think our level has increased much.

“Well, if I remember correctly, the battle wasn’t that difficult when we were on the 23rd floor last time.”
“It wasn’t?”
“This much is fine. Let’s move up in order.”

I dodge the question appropriately and proceed to the next floor.
While partaking in the boss battles, we move up to the 27th floor.
We defeat the 27th floor boss without any problem.

“I didn’t bring the 28th floor map. What would you like to do?”

Roxanne enquires as we arrive at the 28th floor.

“It should be fine if we observe the situation by battling the 27th floor boss today and tomorrow.”
“I don’t think the 27th floor is a problem for us anymore.”
“This is the first time I am fighting repeatedly using magic, after all.”
“Oh, that’s true, too. I understand.”

Roxanne seems to have understood.
I am glad.
We retake the 27th floor boss battle.

However, after retaking the boss battle, I feel that the boss battles are easier than normal battles.
Because the boss battle takes place in a closed room, the battle tends to be close ranged right from the start.
There is almost no chance for us of receiving area of effect magic attacks.
In case of normal monsters, if they spotted us from the other end of the cave, we could receive magic attacks before we closed in.

If they were large in number, the monsters would fall back to the second row which would allow them to use magic attacks.
The 27th floor boss battle is limited to three enemies.
Roxanne takes on the boss and dodges its physical attacks fully.
It must burden Roxanne considerably; however, it should be fine since she doesn’t object.

Sherry must be nervous because she needs to concentrate on keeping the boss from using magic.
Miria and Vesta don’t have any added burden.
Considering the limited number of monsters, the boss battles may be easier.

Miria’s performance is especially outstanding.
The monsters are mercilessly getting silenced thanks to Abnormal Status Resistance Down.
As for the petrified monsters, if I have MP, I can finish them off with magic; otherwise, I can tidy them up with Durandal. I can do as I please.

I can use [Dungeon Walk] to move to the small room in the vicinity of the boss room and head to the boss room. In case there are

monsters close to the entrance of the 28th floor or there are people inside the waiting room, I can kill time fighting normal monsters.
There is not the slightest oversight.

In case we do encounter a problem, we have no contact with other parties.
I never met anyone while exploring Haruba's labyrinth.
Even in Quratar's labyrinth, there is rarely anyone coming to a cave deviated from the route to the 27th floor boss room.
Nearby the boss room, the number of people expectedly increases.

Thus far, Roxanne has been skillfully avoiding them.
Roxanne the great.

"It will soon be evening."
"Then, let's call it a day?"
"Understood."

As per Roxanne's accurate body clock, we call the hunting off.
I am not sure, though, if it is her body clock or something else.

"Isn't Roxanne tired?"
"Nope. Isn't it the same as usual?"

When I ask her if she is tired after retaking the boss battles, she replies me with a 'why especially today?' face.

"Ah, because it was different since it was only the boss battles."
"Thank you for caring. It isn't particularly different."

Be it a boss attack or a normal monster attack, it is one and the same for Roxanne.
She dodges both with ease.

"Is everyone alright?"
"No problem here."
"Yes, desu."
"I think I am alright."

I ask the other three girls. There doesn't seem to be any problem.
Other than Roxanne, everyone seems to be fine.
However, it isn't a topic that can forcibly be drawn out.

So, I decide to return home quickly.

“The Duke of Harz invited us for tonight’s dinner. Let’s head back home and change into the clothes we bought the other day.”

I invoke [Warp] and call the black wall forth.
From Quratar’s Labyrinth, we move to the house.
When we return home, there was a note from Luke.

“Master, there is a message from Mr. Luke. His bid on a Sheep Monster Card seems to have succeeded.”

Roxanne checks.
Sheep Monster Card?

“Sherry, which skill does a Sheep Monster Card grant?”
“It grants the Sleep skill to weapons and Sleep Resistance to armors.”
“Sleep?”

I should attach it to Miria’s equipment since it falls under the abnormal status category.
I should attach it to the Estoc of Petrifaction.

“Inflicting the abnormal status of sleep is relatively easier. If fused together with a Kobold Monster Card, it grants the Hypnosis skill. However, it gets cancelled upon receiving an attack. I think it will be better to to attach it to Roxanne-san’s sword first.”

Sherry suggests.
Should I attach it to Roxanne’s sword then?

I do have a spare Kobold Monster Card.
I acquired two Caterpillar Monster Cards, too, recently.
So as to make a Sacrificial Misanga to sell.

Sleep seems to get cancelled if the target receives an attack.
When the Beep Sheep sent me to sleep, I woke up when I received an attack.
It should be the same even when a monster falls asleep.

Even if Miria sends a monster to sleep, it will immediately get

undone because she will continue to attack until the monster gets petrified.
It would be pointless if you attacked in order to petrify it but woke it up instead.
Sooner or later, it will get cancelled by my magic.

“Is it possible for magic to not cancel sleep?”
“It isn’t.”

Of course.
It would be same as petrification if it didn’t get cancelled by magic. Wouldn’t it be too good?
Even though Miria, being an Assassin, can send them to sleep quickly, it wouldn’t make sense if she woke them up herself immediately after.

Sherry’s advice is logical.
Her suggestion doesn’t seem to be stemming from her apprehension toward fusing it with the Estoc of Petrifaction which contains multiple skills already.
As for roxanne, there is a possibility of her fighting two monsters at the same time. To have one of them falling asleep will be great.
Even though my magic will cancel it right after.

Like Sherry said, should I attach it to Roxanne’s sword?
There will an option to sell it at the lodge if I find something worth buying there.

“Got it. In any case, it will be for tomorrow.”

I will go to the Merchant’s Guild tomorrow since I am visiting the Duke’s place tonight.
I prepare the amber necklaces while waiting for Roxanne and girls to change into their dresses.
Eye candies. Eye candies.
After they change into their dresses, we move to the Bode castle.

The dinner at the Duke’s place seems to be a normal one, just like last time.
There is no challenge to a duel for Roxanne, unlike last time. It really is just a dinner party.

I was cautious to some extent; however, there doesn't seem to be any unreasonable request.
Still, I haven't dropped my guard.

However, I can feel the distance between Cassia and the Duke getting closer.
He held her hand a moment ago.
F**k you.
What a show off.

"Michio-dono provided great help in extermination of Haruba's labyrinth."

At the end of the meal, the Duke expresses gratitude while drinking his wine.
I am drinking herbal tea.
Dwarf Killer seemed to be prepared, too; however, Sherry chose herbal tea instead.

"Not at all. I got to fight in such a good place."

That's right. It was a safe labyrinth.
For the Duke's safety, all the monster filled rooms had been swept clean; however, I don't know if the Duke was aware of that or not.
There is a possibility that Gozer, the man of the world, did that behind his back.

"Thank you for your help in Haruba."

Gozer quickly interrupts upon hearing that.
Is that to prevent me from blurting out something unnecessary?
The Duke didn't know, after all, huh?

"Then, a victory party for the order of knights?"
"It isn't anything of that sort."

I ask Gozer but he denies.
According to Sherry, there is no victory celebration neither any festival held by the town.
It seems to be a light toast hosted for subjugation of the labyrinth.

Because there are labyrinths everywhere, it is not like it will be safe

after defeating one or two.
There are two more labyrinths still left in the territory of the duchy.
There may also be labyrinths that haven't grown to the point of opening their entrance.

"It is our obligation, after all."

One more reason: defeating the labyrinths is duty imposed on the nobility.
Tax is collected for the purpose of maintaining the order of knights.
It is natural for them to be required to get rid of the labyrinths.

"Indeed."
"This? Victory celebration? Not at all."

The Duke seems to have a different idea.
Hopefully, it isn't a strange one.

"What?"
"In four days time. Michio-dono, I am thinking of hosting a small victory celebration in four days."
"Your Highness, that."

Gozer tries to put a stop to it.
The Duke shakes his head, showing his determination.
He seems to be determined as Gozer's restraint proved ineffective.

"Four days later, Michio-dono, I would like you to stay overnight."
"Stay overnight?"
"I will prepare a room, of course. It may get a bit late at night. It won't be as grand a party, though; there won't be many people. You five have to come."

The Duke speaks fervently.
What do you plan on doing?

Don't tell me he will stab us in the back?
There is no way that will happen, is there?
He could do that, you know, if he really wanted to.

"Got it."

It will be inappropriate to decline such an enthusiastic him.
I accept the invitation.
He took care of me on various occasions.
It was an unrequited care, though.

Notes

1. Everything that is received or obtained is put to use

Chapter 182 - Hypnosis

“This is a souvenir for you.”

As I was leaving, the Duke gave me a souvenir.
Jars of Dwarf Killer.
Two of them.
It seems to be the same stuff as they had in the lodge of the Empire Liberation Society.

Did he get it from the lodge?
Is this stuff from the same brewery?

“Thank you.”
“It will be good to drink on a special occasion.”

The Dwarf Killer was probably prepared for Sherry.
The Duke also saw Sherry drink at the lodge.
Was he upset that Sherry had not drunk the Dwarf Killer during the dinner?
That’s how a Japanese person thinks, but maybe that’s not the case here?

What will he do when we come again in four days?
Hmmm.
Well, he wouldn’t have given it to us as a souvenir had he wanted to use it again in four days.
There won’t be any in four days?

“Then, I’ll see you again.”

I passed the jars to Sherry, and we returned to the house.
Since I didn’t prepare the bath today, we just wiped our bodies with hot water before sleeping.
I didn’t skip my enjoyment before sleeping, of course.

After breakfast the next day, I went to the Merchant’s Guild.
I called Luke at the reception desk, and went to the meeting room.

“This is the Sheep Monster Card.”
“Sure.”

I paid the successful bid amount of 4,300 Nars and received the Sheep Monster Card.

“Also, a broker came to make an offer after my successful bid yesterday. He has a Sheep Monster Card; he’d like to offer for 5,000 Nars.”
“Another one?”

This kind of thing happens as well?
Making a successful bid means you want that monster card.
If you have leftover cards, then you can sell them to someone who has made a successful bid.
I can succeed in fusion, though, with just the monster card I bought.

“It’s not a bad deal since you won’t have to pay me the commission.”

Even with a bid of 4,300 I have to pay 500 Nars to Luke as commission.
The total is 4,800 Nars, so if I’m offered one for 5,000 Nars then it’s only a 200 Nars increase.

“Then, there’s nothing in it for you?”
“I do this as a standard service.”

Maybe he will get a kickback?
Brokers don’t work for free, after all.
Should I accept a 200 Nars increase then?

“So, that’s how it is, huh? I will buy the card then.”
“I can wait till you’ve tried to fuse this card before I answer them.”
“It’s fine. I’ll buy it no matter if I succeed or fail.”
“I understand. I’ll prepare it today. Please come again tomorrow morning.”

I let him know I’ll buy it, and then leave the Merchant’s Guild.
Next, I went to the lodge and the weapons shop, and checked to make sure there wasn’t anything valuable.
I have no choice but to use a Rapier?
I purchased a Rapier and a Steel Sword from the weapons shop

before returning.

When I returned to the house, I passed two monster cards and a Rapier to Sherry.
Sherry fused them without worry.

“A Rapier of Hypnosis? As expected of Sherry.”

It seems that a Rapier that is fused with Kobold and Sheep Monster Cards is called a Rapier of Hypnosis.
The [Hypnosis] skill is attached to it.

“Thank you.”
“Then, this is for Roxanne.”

I passed the Rapier of Hypnosis to Roxanne.

“Even though I already had a Rapier.”
“That one wasn’t too good. Please use this one from now on.”
“Yes, Master. Thank you very much.”

Roxanne accepts it with gratitude.
It couldn’t be helped because there were no skill slots on the Rapier Roxanne had used up until now.

“Vesta, take this.”

I handed the steel sword which I had bought for a 30% discount to Vesta.

“Is it good?”
“It’s a good piece of equipment with the chance to strengthen it little by little.”
“Okay. Thank you.”

Vesta gladly receives it.
Both of them seem pleased.
Roxanne is looking at her sword with rapture.
Is she that happy?

“I’m glad you like it. It’s thanks to Sherry as well.”
“It’s because Roxanne is from the wolfkin tribe.”
“What do you mean?”

“There’s a theory that you can use really strong beast attacks against sleeping demons, so the wolfkin tribe have a really strong desire for weapons that cause sleep.”

Sherry informed me in a quiet voice when I tilted my head.
A sleeping demon will be woken up if you attack it, will there be more damage if a [Beast attack] is used?
[Beast attack] is the skill of the Beast Warrior job, which is the racial job of the wolfkin tribe.
The incantation required is long, but it’s possible to use it anyway against a sleeping target.

It’s probably a good match up to have a Beast Warrior with a weapon that causes sleep.
That must be why the wolfkin tribe has a strong desire for a weapon that causes sleep.
Sherry knew this and it may have been part of the reason she recommended the Sheep Monster Card for Roxanne’s weapon.

It’s good.
I quietly pat Sherry’s head.

Miria has the role of causing abnormal status in our party.
If Sherry hadn’t said anything, the [Hypnosis] skill might have been put on the Estoc of Petrifaction.
Roxanne wouldn’t have complained, but she might have been bottling up inside.
It’s best to have used it on Roxanne’s sword first.

“Well, shall we go to the labyrinth then?”

Roxanne who was looking longingly at her sword jumped up, and we went to Quratar’s 27th floor.
We left the small room and headed towards the boss room.
Just as I thought of it, Roxanne starts heading in a different direction.

“Here. There’s some nearby.”

There seems to be a demon nearby.
We’ve stopped on the way to hunt.

It’s a Cape Carp, two Scissor Lizards and a Black Frog.

[Thunder Storm], [Dirt Storm], and [Sand Storm]. I launched a barrage of three spells.
We aren’t at the boss, so I don’t have Gambler active.
Instead, I am using Wizard.
The other four start running as well.

Roxanne runs holding her Rapier of Hypnosis.
Miria charges straight at the Cape Carp on the right.
Roxanne takes on the two Scissor Lizards in the center, and Vesta is taking on the Black Frog on the left.
Roxanne pierces a Scissor Lizard with her Rapier.

The demon’s movements did not stop from the first blow.
My lightning magic didn’t stop any either.
Roxanne avoids the swing of their scissors and then launches a counter attack.
It’s also useless?

The first Scissor Lizard was stopped by my next lightning magic.
Roxanne focused her attacks on the other.
Its scissors swung down weakly.

It seems to have fallen asleep.
It’s asleep.
It’s still standing, but it’s hanging it’s arms and head down.
That’s how it is?

Roxanne attacked the Black Frog which Vesta was fighting next.
We don’t know how long the paralysis and sleep status will take to wear off.
It’s best to pay attention to the demons that can still move.

“I did it, desu!”

Miria’s taken care of the Cape Carp.
Miria squeezes between the petrified Cape Carp and the sleeping Scissor Lizard.
She skillfully got to the far side of the opponents.

“Thunderstorm.”

I gave a warning that I was using magic.
Calling out the name of my magic makes me feel like I have 8th grade syndrome, but the purpose is a warning.
It would be difficult for those nearby if it wakes up.

The Scissor Lizard wakes up when it is hit by my magic.
It lifted its head and its scissors.
Actually, because I hit it with a barrage of three spells, it just fell over.
Both Scissor Lizards are defeated.

We concentrate our attacks on the remaining Black Frog.
The frog's movements are stopped because of Miria's attacks.
She doesn't say anything, so it seems to be paralysis.

Paralysis is enough.
The two remaining demons are defeated by my next barrage of three spells.
The demons are totally annihilated.

Sleep proc'd once. I wonder how useful the Rapier of Hypnosis will be.
I'm not sure yet since I don't know how often the effect will proc.
There was only one paralysis from my lightning magic this time as well.
Sometimes, that's how it is.

"You're right Sherry, things will be easier with sleep."
"Yes."
"It's too bad we can't use Beast Attack."

When I spoke to Sherry, Roxanne also joined the conversation.

"It's because we also need recovery."
"Yes. Please leave the recovery to me."

I needed to keep Roxanne's job as Shrine Maiden, so it can't be helped.
Roxanne doesn't seem to fuss about not having Beast Warrior at least.

"Is it hard to work out which demon to attack?"

When sleep procs, it becomes a little complicated to work out which demon to attack.
My magic cancels the effect as well.

“There’s no problem.”

I’ll just leave it to the vanguards?
After that, we repeatedly fought the boss on the 27th floor until evening.
Sleep seems to be similar in frequency to the paralysis caused by my lightning magic.
But Roxanne is only fighting one demon. [Thunder Storm] attacks all demons. The chance of sleep might be higher than my paralysis.

It’s easy to see they’ve fallen asleep when they droop their heads.
On the other hand, it’s bad because my magic can wake them up immediately.
There’s good points and bad points.
Even so, our war potential has gone up.

“We’ve repeatedly fought the boss of the 27th floor again. Does everyone think it’s fine if we go against the boss of the 28th floor tomorrow?”
“Of course, there is no problem.”
“I don’t think there’s any problem.”
“Yes, desu.”
“I think it’s safe.”

I checked with them at supper, but there were no cautious opinions.
It’s decided then.
Sherry’s just started to drink some Dwarf Killer, but she’s not drunk yet, so there shouldn’t be any problem with her judgement.

The time after supper was wonderful, since Sherry emptied two jars of Dwarf Killer, and Roxanne had been in a good mood all day.
I used Sex Maniac during the night, so I was in a good mood as well.
I’m glad.
I have this place to come back to.

The next morning, we entered the boss room of Quratar’s 28th floor.

There are two Cyclopes and a Silver Cyclops for our first run.
After using [Abnormal Status Resistance Down] on the Cyclops Miria was facing I used two [Thunder Storm]'s.
Wind magic might be better, but I'm using lightning magic with the aim of the abnormal status effects.

One Cyclops was paralyzed by the lightning magic.
Sadly, it's the one Miria is taking on, but that's to be expected since it's the one I used [Abnormal Status Resistance Down] on.
After two more lightning spells, I put [Abnormal Status Resistance Down] on the boss.

Roxanne was taking on the boss.
I think it might be difficult to put the boss into the sleep state.
Even though we fought the boss on the 27th floor many times yesterday, it was never affected by sleep.
Like sleep, the effect of paralysis from my lightning magic is also rare.

Normally, these effects are probably rather rare until the effects of my [Abnormal Status Resistance Down] and Assassin's [Abnormal Status Chance Up] effects combine.
Since we haven't seen any benefits on the bosses and we've been fighting them for a while, Maybe it was a bad decision to attach sleep to Roxanne's weapon?
Well, it's done now.

"I did it, desu!"

Miria left the paralyzed Cyclops, and petrified the boss.
Miria's effect is still quite large against the boss.
Things are still getting harder, though.
We can't relax.

The Cyclops which Vesta was taking on was paralyzed by lightning magic, and the Cyclops that had been paralyzed previously begins to move again.
Roxanne thrusts her Rapier of Hypnosis into it.
The Cyclops shuts its eye and hangs its head.

Sleep.

The effect of [Abnormal Status Resistance Down] shows again, it's a single blow.

"Thunderstorm."

I gave a warning, and shot lightning magic.
This warning.
Has a reason.
It's different from 8th grade syndrome.

Sleep getting cancelled by my magic attacks is quite troublesome.
The Cyclops wakes up.
As the Cyclops wakes up, he becomes silent at once because of Miria.
Miria petrifies it. Only one is left now.

It seems like there's no problem fighting against the boss on the 28th floor either.
The boss fight just seems like a wait until Miria's petrifaction proc's.
At least, until the 33rd floor.

The demon on Quratar's 29th floor seems to be the Moloch Taurus.
We've already seen the Moloch Taurus while exploring Haruba's 27th floor, but it will be the first time seeing the boss.
We'll have to be careful.

The Lv29 Moloch Taurus doesn't cause any problems for us.
Only the battle time is slightly longer.
I still can't understand if the skill [Progressive Increase in Damage] is effective.
It might be effective, but I don't know.

Since I can set Jobless's skill to Intermediate Water Magic, which is Moloch Taurus's weakness, it becomes easier to explore the 29th floor.
But I'm not sure if there is additional benefit.
The combination of demons on the 29th floor is different to other labyrinths.
Using lightning magic would be quite convenient as well.
Especially, if paralysis proc's when there are a large number of demons.

We hunt through the morning, and then I go to the Merchant's Guild after breakfast.
When I call for Luke, he comes out at once.

"The other party is waiting at the guild shrine. I'll leave after I've introduced you, so feel free to make a deal as you wish."

Oh. The guild shrine.
It's where you examine your monster cards after you've bought them.
I'll have to pay 100 Nars to use it.
That makes the total price increase 300 Nars.

Chapter 183 - Capacity

"You seem to be the one who purchased the Sheep Monster Card this time. Thank you very much."

When I arrive at the guild temple room, the Armor Merchant, who was waiting there, bows.
This Armor Merchant seems to be the one who sold the Sheep Monster Card.
From his greedy expression, he seems to be a vicious man.

"Not at all. It was for my own convenience."
"But the Monster Card Fusion is immensely difficult."

When I return an appropriate greeting, the Armor Merchant's face distorts repulsively.
Because I won merely one, the Monster Card Fusion would surely fail; you think so, don't you?
But it has succeeded already.
I can't say that out loud, however.

This way, I won't have to lie. I'll let him believe that it has failed.
Sherry won't complain either.
I shrug and look at Luke.

"This man here is an Armor Merchant like me. He acts as a broker at the auction. It would be foolish if the guild temple were used twice, so I have decided to use it today. This friend here is an Adventurer. He wishes to have the Sheep Monster Card."

Luke introduces me and the Armor Merchant.
If Luke purchased the monster card from this Armor Merchant and I took it over from Luke, the guild temple would need to be used twice.
When I buy, I don't need verification; however, it's normally a necessity.
That I'm transacting directly, it'll 'supposedly' save me some cost.

"I look forward to working with you, dear customer."

“Likewise.”
“With this, I’m off.”

After Luke finishes introductions, he leaves the guild temple room.
Does he really have some business?
Or, is it not necessary for him to be present?

“To tell you the truth, I own two Sheep Monster Cards. What do you say about two?”

After Luke leaves, the face of the Armor Merchant distorts even more as he approaches me with an offer.

“I can give you the second one for 4,900 Nars.”

I see.
So, Luke left in consideration of what this man might have to say.
Transacting directly because it would be wasteful if the guild temple were used twice must be this Armor Merchant’s proposition, too.
His implicit objective must be to sell a second card.

I cannot imagine this Armor Merchant approaching me with a deal wherein he would incur a loss.
There must have been a kickback for Luke, no?
A 100 Nars kickback?
Nah, there’s no reason.

If he returned 100 Nars from 5,000 Nars of the first card to Luke, what additional benefit would he have in selling the second one for 4,900 Nars?
If Luke’s kickback were 200 Nars, the profit of this Armor Merchant would be divided.
How could it be?
How could this greedy Armor Merchant let his profit be divided so easily?

If it comes to Luke’s kickback being 300 Nars or more.
Is it possibly about same as the commission of 500 Nars?
For Luke, there doesn’t seem to be any profit in introducing me over bidding on it and transferring it to me.
Having said that, this Armor Merchant must have persuaded him.

“It won’t be bad to have two cards.”

I pretend to be lost in thought while observing the expression of the Armor Merchant.
If it includes a kickback, there may be more room for it to go down.

“Then, how about 4,800 Nars?”
“More.”
“I’ll give you the second one for 4,700 Nars.”
“Alright then, I’ll buy it.”

I might get an even better price if I acted some more; however, it’s good enough as is.
If I went too far and he pulled back from selling the second one, I would be troubled.
The reason being…

“Thank you very much. Then, since you’re buying the second card together with the first one, I’ll give you a special price of 6,790 Nars for two.”

Alrighty!
Because it was increased to two cards, 30% Discount was effective.
Taste your own medicine, doctor.

Before he could say anything, I pay him the amount and 2 silver coins to the staff member of the guild temple.
Urged by the staff member, the Armor Merchant hands over the two cards.

He confirms right away that the Sheep Monster Cards are genuine.
After verification, I put the monster cards inside my Item Box.

“Thank you for the business today!”

Amidst the Armor Merchant’s cry, I leave the guild temple room.
It might be problematic if I used 30% Discount too much; however, it’s fine for now.
I flee back home.

“Welcome back.”
“I have obtained a Sheep Monster Card. So, what should I do now?”

Upon returning home, I consult with Sherry who was the only one left in the living room.
Roxanne and the rest are doing cleaning and laundry.
As for Sherry, she'll be performing the Monster Card Fusion now that I have returned.

"Which equipment should it be fused with, is that what you mean?"
"That, too, but there's another option. Keeping it unused, that is."

When the Rapier of Hypnosis was used yesterday, it occurred to me.
Sleep can be cancelled by magic; therefore, its compatibility with our party, the main constituent of whose attack is my magic, is low.

Impudently speaking, it'll only be a stopgap.
An immediate resort in an emergency situation.
Presently, however, I don't think there's any danger.

"That's right. If there's no absolute need to keep it, fusing it with an armor will be effective, too. After all, it'll soon be the Beep Sheep floor."

Beep Sheep, that uses the Sleep skill, is the boss of Quratar's 4th floor.
Because the bosses start showing up (as normal monsters) after 33rd floor, the Beep Sheep should show up on Quratar's 37th floor.
At the rate of 2 days per floor, it'll be pretty soon.

However, I don't think it'll be that easy for us to advance.
We may hit the wall around 34-35th floor, don't you think?
I won't know until I'm there.
So, the idea of keeping it unused isn't bad.

"Then, let's leave it as is."
"Yes, it's a good idea."

The Kobold Monster Cards are in balance, too.
So, I decide to keep the Sheep Monster Cards in hand.

For two days, I enter the labyrinth and partake in the 28th floor boss battle.
The boss battle is a good experience, too, isn't it?

There won't be any issue even if we proceed to the next floor.
Incidentally, at the dinner, I find out that the prudence policy didn't go down well.

"Sherry, which is the boss of the 29th floor?"
"The Moloch Taurus boss is called Boss Taurus. Same as Moloch Taurus, a Boss Taurus is resistant to Fire magic and weak against Water."
"Boss Taurus?"

The boss is called Boss? Isn't it obvious?
However, it'll show up as a normal monster on the 62nd floor.
Even though it's called Boss.

"Because its blows are intense, Roxanne-san will have to dodge well."
"Okay, it's fine."

Roxanne nods confidently.
Although it'll be our first time encountering the Moloch Taurus boss, I don't have to be worried for Roxanne will be keeping it company.

The next morning, we enter the 29th floor boss room.
In the first boss battle, two Cyclopes show up beside the Boss Taurus.
The Moloch Tauruses didn't come out this time.

After applying Abnormal Status Resistance Down on the cyclops, which Miria was confronting, I cast two Thunderstorms.
The movements of the two Cyclopes cease.
Oops!
Even the cyclops that was applied with Abnormal Status Resistance Down seems to have been paralyzed.

"Roxanne-san, a little more to the front."

Sherry makes Roxanne advance.

"Okay."
"You, too, Vesta. Around there."
"Understood."

Since the Cyclopes have been paralyzed, there is no need to wait for the boss.
However, it is necessary for Sherry to take a position where her spear will be able to reach from once the paralysis wears off.
I leave this area to Sherry.
And cast Abnormal Status Resistance Down on the boss.

Roxanne stands in front of the Boss Taurus.
Roxanne lightly wrings her body and dodges the swinging low monster.
The Boss Taurus, too, is a bipedal cowkin just like a Moloch Taurus.
Its shoulders are stern.

Its whole body is covered in dark brown fur.
Regrettably, it doesn't have black and white mottles.
It's swinging its arms furiously; however, Roxanne is dodging it in its entirety.

"Did it, desu."

While the boss was engaged with Roxanne, Miria petrifies it.
There seems to be some way to go before petrifaction passes for a boss.
I thought I would be able to notice if the boss were petrified, it being brown; however, I wasn't able to tell at all.
It cannot be distinguished from paralysis by sight.

It's Miria's first time seeing it, too, so how can she notice petrifaction?
Actually, it becomes 'white' upon petrifaction.
However, its color is still brown. It hasn't changed.
Even if a black and white Moloch Taurus were to be petrified, I wouldn't be able notice at all.
It will turn white in some places. Probably.

Miria attacks the remaining monster next to the petrified cyclops that had been applied with Abnormal Status Resistance Down.
Before Miria could inflict abnormal status, it dies to my magic because I didn't cast Abnormal Status Resistance Down on the remaining Cyclops.
As the boss had already been petrified, I slaughter it with Wind

magic which is the weakness of a cyclops.
After the two Cyclopes, I shoot an Aquaball at the Boss Taurus.

“Sherry, does a Boss Taurus drop an ingredient?”
“Yes. A Boss Taurus drops three varieties of items. Apart from roast, it drops whey and, very rarely, chuck flap.”
“Really?”

So, it drops a rare ingredient, after all, huh?
And three varieties at that?
I remove Gambler, select Cook and finish the petrified boss off.
Since I have removed Gambler, Abnormal Status Resistance Down should lose its effect; however, it has no relation to petrifaction which has already been inflicted.

The cowkin turns into smoke.
When the smoke dissipates, a lump of meat was left.
It’s a roast.
Failed?

Nope, a roast is already enough.
It may be an extremely rare ingredient that hardly ever drops just like a chuck rib; a premium ingredient, that is.
The drop rate of which doesn’t increase even after using Cook’s Rare Ingredient Drop Rate Up.

If that’s how it is…
Then, will whey ever drop?
Oh well. I can’t judge the tendency from just one attempt anyway.

“It’s said that a roast cannot be differentiated from a chuck flap.”
“It’s unlikely for a chuck flap to drop at first attempt. It should be a roast.”

Although it’s merely a lump of meat, I can tell it’s a roast because Appraisal is displaying so.
If I keep telling them not to hold high hopes, they won’t hold high hopes.

“I guess.”

Sherry judges calmly.

I put the roast in my Item Box.

As a third party, I can judge whether it's a roast or a chuck flap by putting it inside my Item Box.
However, my Item Box has limited capacity.
If it were any other drop than roast, it wouldn't enter.
Actually, if it's about entering, there's the space where taken off equipment are put in.

Well, as far as taken off equipment are concerned, I can select Explorer after leaving the labyrinth.
And then, before entering the labyrinth, I can take out the equipment and remove Explorer.
It's bothersome, though.
How should I go about it?

If I am to retake the 29th floor boss battle, there's an option of selecting Cook.
With Cook, I can use its Item Box and take advantage of Rare Ingredient Drop Rate Up.
However, it'll be too tight for me to add Seventh Job.

The number of items needed to be kept in the Item Box will continue to increase in the future.
It's a pain that Adventurer's Item Box has a fixed capacity of 50 types of items x 50 units.
At the moment, my Adventurer job is Lv42, so it's profitable for me; however, it won't be the case in the future.

Or, will it perhaps be 51 types of items x 51 units when Adventurer hits Lv51?
It's impossible.
I haven't heard such a thing.
If the capacity of Adventurer's Item Box increased onward from Lv51, it would be widely known.

"Then, let's move on?"
"The monster native to Quratar's 30th floor is Half Herb. While it's weak against Fire magic, it's resistant to Wind, Earth and Water magic."

Ah, we will face a new monster if we move up.
A new monster will drop a new item.
More space will be needed to put it in the Item Box.

Well, I can keep other items than cooking ingredients in the rucksack.
But that'll lead to another topic.
So, I have to keep all the items in my Item Box.
Because the equipment are out of the Item Box, there's capacity.

When I leave the labyrinth, should I select Explorer then?
Or, do I add Seventh Job and select Cook permanently?
Because the 29th floor boss drops rare ingredients, I have temporarily selected Cook; however, it'll be better to select Explorer which I'm accustomed to.
So, should I incline toward Explorer?

But what would happen when the number of items needed to be kept in the Item Box increased? After all, Explorer is only an expedience outside the labyrinth.
The capacity of Adventurer's Item Box is probably fixed and it's about to reach its limit.
Oh well. Let's think about it when the time comes.

Chapter 184 - Half

"This way."

When we move up to the 30th floor, Roxanne guides us.
It seems to be close by.
After following her for a while, we come across a group of two Half Herbs and a Moloch Taurus.

Three monsters, huh?
Because it's our first battle on the 30th floor, Roxanne has led us to a place with fewer monsters.
Even though it's a group of three, because it's the 30th floor, it can be considered a small group.

After the 32nd floor, the maximum number of monsters in a group will increase to six.
We may hit the wall around there.
Never did I believe that I would be able to breeze through to the 37th floor.

I welcome the monsters with two Lightning spells and a Firestorm.
The movements of the three cease.
This time around, all of them seem to have been paralyzed.
Is such a thing even possible?

A Half Herb is weak against Fire magic while a Moloch Taurus is resistant to Fire magic.
A Moloch Taurus has weakness against Water magic while a Half Herb has resistance to Water magic.
I have to make do with Lightning magic on the 30th floor; however, it worked wonders this time.

Still, a Half Herb has resistance toward too many attributes.
It is resistant to Earth, Wind and Water magic.
To think that it's called Half…

A Half Herb is about as high as an average human's waist.
From its name, I had already guessed that it would look like some

kind of herb.
So, is it called Half because of its height is half of a human's?

For a herb, though, it's pretty large.

Roxanne and the girls rush over to the stiffened monsters.
While they were en route, one of the Half Herbs had regained movement; however, it gets paralyzed again after the second barrage of three spells.
Roxanne and Vesta attack the stiffened Half Herb.

Miria runs through the side of the Half Herb.
Shouldn't she attack the Moloch Taurus?
Sure enough. After I cast Firestorm, Miria aims at the Moloch Taurus.

Sherry, too, passes through the Half Herb's side; however, she halts a bit short and thrusts her spear in from the rear.
Because Sherry's duty is to cancel the skills using her Incantation Interruption spear, her action is the right one.
While attacking, Vesta goes around bit by bit.

Roxanne and the girls severely stab at the Half Herb in front of them.
I don't think the paralyzed monster has fallen asleep.
Thus far, there has been no instance.

Even if it fell asleep, it wouldn't be able to be distinguished for it cannot move due to paralysis.
Even if it fell asleep and woke up after receiving an attack, it wouldn't be able to move for it's paralyzed.
However, I wonder if it had fallen asleep earlier.

"Did it, desu."

After I launch another barrage of three spells, Miria petrifies the Moloch Taurus.
At the same time, the paralysis of the Half Herb begins to wear off as it starts moving.
However, Roxanne immediately attacks it after which its leaves droop.

It has fallen asleep.

The Half Herb has properly been inflicted with the abnormal status of sleep.
Oh well. It's a monster, after all.
In the first place, monsters tend to originally be asleep or so I've heard.

"Thunderstorm."

Issuing the warning, I launch another barrage of three spells.
Even if the Half Herb wakes up, Roxanne is standing in front of it while Vesta and Sherry are encircling it.
Subsequently, it gets paralyzed as is.

Did it get paralyzed right after it woke up to the first Lightning spell?
Or, did it wake up to the first Lightning spell and got paralyzed by the second?
In either case, it will have to suffer.

"Did it, desu."

Miria petrifies the Half Herb that has been under the effect of paralysis from the outset.
Next, I take care of the monsters with magic.
All three of them collapse.

The Half Herb turns into smoke and dissipates.
What it left behind is a slim stalk.
When I use Appraisal, it says ephedra.
Is this the Half Herb drop?

"So, it's an ephedra."

While Vesta picks it up, Sherry informs.
Sherry seems to know that it's an ephedra.

"Did you say ephedra?"
"An experienced Herbalist can produce an all purpose pill using an ephedra."

An all purpose pill can recover HP and MP, heal injuries and cure diseases. It may even remove abnormal statuses. That's why it's called all purpose.

It’s a terrific medicine to be honest.
As for removing abnormal statuses, it’s a chance.
It’s not an absolute.

However, it doesn’t warrant it to be looked down on.
Abnormal status inflicted by a strong monster tends to be strong.
Poison inflicted by a lower ranked monster can be removed 100% with an antidote pill; however, poison inflicted by a higher ranked monster may not be removed even if you consume an antidote pill.
If you make a mistake, you can easily restore HP with an all purpose pill.
A higher ranked all purpose medicine can remove abnormal statuses without fail.

I have already received a lecture in this regard from Sherry-sensei before.
Can I make an all purpose pill?
An all purpose pill is a lower ranked all purpose medicine, after all.

I select Herbalist.
I put the ephedra, which I received from Vesta, on my palm and invoke Create Crude Medicine.
The ephedra on my palm turns into two pills.

It’s an all purpose pill.
And, there seem to be two.
I had my doubts for it supposedly requires one to be experienced; however, I somehow managed to do it merely with Herbalist Lv6.

To produce an all purpose pill, does one perhaps have to be a Herbalist Lv5 or more?
To keep my failures from being public, I should have invoked Create Crude Medicine privately; however, that I did magnificently well, I’m glad.
Oh well. It can’t be helped.

“Is this an all purpose pill?”
“So, you can make it.”
“As expected of Master.”

Roxanne compliments calculatively.

I probably need to level Herbalist up before I'm able to produce a higher ranked all purpose pill.
So, is it better to level Herbalist up?
If an all purpose pill requires Herbalist Lv5 or more, the next one should need Lv10 or Lv15.

Considering the efficiency, leveling it up after the next material item appears won't be a bad idea; however, I won't be able to show off in front of Roxanne and the girls.
Also, if impossible became possible within 1-2 days, there would be a risk of Sherry delving deep into it.
Although reaching Lv50 will be difficult, Lv10 or Lv20 can immediately be managed.
I should level Herbalist up for a while.

How about adding a Seventh Job?
It'll be painful to spend bonus points to add a Seventh Job just to level a job up.
Can I not remove Wizard and select Herbalist in its place?

Because I have already done the boss battles without Wizard, fighting normal monsters shouldn't be out of question.
Besides, the magic attributes of Wizard aren't effective against the monsters of Quratar's 29th and 30th floors.
Lightning magic of Grand Wizard and Jobless plays the main role.
So, removing Wizard is a viable option.

"Then, let's return to the 29th floor? Because there'll be a change in the constitution of magic, please be careful."
"There'll be a change?"
"A little, yes. It has to do with the floor incompatibility."

Sherry, as expected, nibbles; however, I successfully deceive her.
Hence, I move back to the 29th floor and fight employing the dual attack system comprising Grand Wizard and Jobless spells.
Although the duration of battles has increased, it's satisfactory, isn't it?
The more the battle lengthens, the more Miria's petrifaction proc's.
There's paralysis, too, for I'll be using Lightning magic.

During the boss battles, I can simply replace Herbalist with Gambler.

Depending on the situation, I can switch it to Cook, too. If you asked me whether it's bothersome, I would say it is; however, it can't be helped.
Thus far, it doesn't feel too unusual.
Because I have Herbalist selected, I'm producing all purpose pills as and when I receive an ephedra.
I can keep it in the space of my Item Box.

Or so I thought; however, whey drops three times during the boss battles.
Speaking of whey, it's a rare ingredient.
After I leave the labyrinth, I'd better select Explorer.

"Yes, desu."

Like a Naive Olive's dropped item, olive oil, it's a liquid packed in a thin film.
It's a mystery liquid left behind by a cowkin.

"Is it perhaps milk?"
"It's whey. It's richer than milk; it's a valuable item. It's absolutely delicious; however, not many drink it as is. If it's added to a soup, it becomes extraordinarily tasty."

Explains Sherry.
I thought it would be milk since it's dropped by a cowkin, that drops roast; however, it seems to be a seasoning.
I can perhaps make white stew with it.
After receiving it from Miria, I carefully put it inside my Item Box, so that it's thin film doesn't get torn.

Another Boss Taurus dropped a chuck flap.
However, it wasn't during today's hunting.
Even after one full day of hunting, not many chuck ribs have dropped.
Nothing can be done about it, though.

"Let's call it a day?"
"It seems to be a little early, though."
"It's because we have been invited by the Duke again."
"Which reminds me, you did mention it."

Although not a single chuck flap has dropped, we call it off a little early.
Whey, on the other hand, has dropped plenty.
There are many in my Item Box.
It's probably Cook's contribution.

"I haven't heard of any such thing as an overnight victory celebration gathering. Will it be alright?"

Sherry expresses her concern.
Is there a possibility of it being a trap?
The Duke's manner of speech did seem unnatural.
According to Sherry, there's no such thing as an overnight victory celebration gathering.

I'll go, nevertheless.
The reason being, it's difficult for me to decline.
If it's just this time, it cannot be suspicious; however, if he invites again, it can be considered a trap.
Unless I cut off all the ties, I won't be able to decline all of his invitations in the future.

I want to maintain a good relationship with Cassia and Gozer.
With everyone but the Duke.

"If he wanted to kill us, he would have poisoned the food last time and be done with us; therefore, it'll be alright."

I have visited the Duke's place numerous times yet nothing has happened thus far.
Nothing fatal, at least.
Therefore, it should be alright.
The only nuisance to me is the attention; however, with Gozer there, the worst can be avoided.

To visit the Duke, I finish hunting ahead of time.
From Quratar's labyrinth, we return home.
And go straight to the bedroom.
After all, we'll be staying overnight.

I cannot afford to make 'noise' in the room borrowed from the Duke.

And, I don't know as to what kind of room it'll be.
There may be separate rooms arranged for males and females.

Now that I think about it, what would I do if they didn't prepare beds for Roxanne and the girls.
Damn.
There's a possibility for they know they're slaves.
Since they invited me as a guest, they must've prepared the minimum, right?

Well, if it does happen, I can simply return, no?
Oh well. I'll see when the time comes.
For now, I drain myself dry once and head to Bode after getting ready.

"The leader is in the office."

When I arrive at the lobby, the member of the order of knights informs me.
Curt.
Same as usual.
They always respond this way. No change.

The mood doesn't suggest that there's going to be a celebration.
Or, did they let me in on my own because they're busy with the preparations, perhaps?
I'm always let in without permission.

"Come in."

When I proceed to the office and knock, comes Gozer's voice.
I enter.

"Michio here."
"Ooh, Michio-dono. You've finally come."

There's the Duke, too, unsurprisingly.

"I was waiting."
"Well then, Gozer, we're executing Operation SE-2."
"Eh? Wha-?"

Gozer greets us with bewilderment.
What the heck is Operation SE-2?
Gozer doesn't seem to know either.
It must've been arranged for beforehand.

"'That' is Operation SE-2."
"No way. That?"
"We're executing it tonight."
"Wha- okay."

Gozer seems to be aware of the operation itself.
He just didn't know that it would be executed tonight.

"I'm afraid to tell you, Michio-dono, that there's an emergency."
"Haa."

What's the emergency?
Until now, I didn't notice any change at all since I came here.
Even from Gozer's looks.

"I apologize for not circulating the emergency summons. Excuse my incompetence."

Gozer rushes out of the office.
Emergency summons?
What's happening?

"Then, let's have dinner?"
"Ah, emergency?"
"No, no, don't mind it. We still have some time."

It doesn't seem to yet be the time to rush.
Even though it's an emergency.
Will it be alright?

But then, they wouldn't be moron enough to circulate the emergency summons in front of us if they were to assemble warriors against us.
Don't you think?
They would've arranged for it earlier if they intended to.

"Is everything alright?"
"I'll explain the situation later. Follow me, please."

The Duke leaves the room.
Roxanne and Sherry look at me. They didn't get it either for they have their heads tilted.
So, it really is incomprehensible, huh?
Even Gozer didn't get it.

Since there's no helping it, we follow the Duke.
There's an uneasy feeling; however, they wouldn't do it so openly if it were a trap for us.
The explanation seems to be on the other side.

The Duke proceeds to the usual dining room.
Is it really going to be a dinner?

"Thank you for coming. I was waiting."

Inside the room is Cassia, dressed up.
For a Duchess, it may be a casual wear.
The dressed up Cassia looks so beautiful.
The not dressed up Cassia must be beautiful, too.
The dinner has already been prepared.
Beside her, there are other people inside the room.

"I apologize. An urgent matter requires Gozer to attend to it. I and Michio-dono will be having dinner in the conference room. Send the meal for seven people over, please."

The Duke speaks to Cassia.

"Eh? Ah……okay."

Cassia gets taken aback but she recovers right after.
She instructs the servants in the room.

Now that I think about it, Gozer recovered immediately, too.
After living together with the Duke, they seem to have steeled their nerves.
There must be no end to his capricious actions.

Chapter 185 - Operation

“Sorry for much *batabata* ado.”

The Duke leads us to another room.
It’s a conference room which is neither small nor large.
It’ll be enough for us to dine.

“Not at all.”
“We’ll be having dinner here. I have various things to explain.”

You could explain in the previous room, too, you know?
It’s a mystery to me as to why you had to switch rooms.
Now, all the dishes will have to be brought over again.
That’s worker abuse, Duke.

“Is this about all? If so, please leave.”

With all the dishes having been brought over, the Duke instructs the servants.

“Here’s the drink.”
“Thank you for the work.”
“Then, we’ll take our leave.”

The servant, who was carrying the pitcher, bows and leaves the room last.
Inside the room are the Duke, Cassia and us only.

“Here’s the drink. Please enjoy yourself, everyone. It’s just the herbal tea, so rest assured.”
“Okay.”

I take a seat.
The Duke and Cassia are across the interposed side of the ⊐ shaped table. On one side are I, Roxanne and Miria.
On the other side of the table are Sherry and Vesta.

“Umm, what is this about?”

Sitting abreast the Duke, Cassia enquires.
So, Cassia isn't privy to this matter either.

"Sorry for the trouble, Cassia, but it's necessary."
"Don't tell me……is it that?

Or, is she?
Cassia seems to have gotten it.
The Duke nods exaggeratedly.

"Sorry."
"Not at all. I knew this day would come someday, so I had resolved myself."

It seems to be a shock to Cassia.
Is it something bad?
Like punishing the guests?
When Cassia droops her head, the Duke turns toward us.

"There is a custom pertaining to the conference rooms. Once inside, no one leaves until the conference is over. In this case, it's the dinner. I hope you don't intend to leave, Michio-dono, everyone, before the dinner is over."
"Is there such a custom?"
"It's to ensure that a decision is reached by all means."
"I see."

No one is to leave until a decision has been reached, huh?
Is this the election of the pope or something?
Where they perform the test of endurance.

"Strategy meetings are conducted, too, sometimes."
"Strategy meeting?"

If no one leaves, the information won't leak outside until the meeting is over.
It'll be perfect for a strategy meeting.

"Before further explanation, let's have dinner first? Cassia?"
"Okay."

You want us to eat?

Oh well. After having come this far, there's no point in being defiant.

"Everyone, please."

He urges Roxanne and Sherry who were perspicuously anxious.
The reason as to why they are silent is because they cannot question the Duke ahead of me.
Miria, who jumps at the fish, evidently doesn't care.

"Does Michio-dono know that a noble may lose their title if they fail to subjugate a labyrinth in their territory?"

The Duke faces me and asks.

"I don't."
"If a labyrinth or the monsters run rampant, no one can live there anymore, anyway. Even if one has the title of nobility, it's worthless. So, it's natural for them to be stripped of their title."

When someone defeats a labyrinth, they receive the title of nobility.
By the same token, if someone is unable to defeat a labyrinth, they cease to be a noble, huh?
It's a harsh system of reward and punishment.
Better yet, candy and whip.

"It's about the Earldom of Selmar."

Cassia murmurs.
The Earldom of Selmar. In other words, Cassia's home.
I have been there.

Is it in danger?
So the state of emergency has nothing to do with us or the Duke but the Earl of Selmar.

"Ever since the current Earl came in power, not a single labyrinth has been subjugated. At this point, he hasn't lost his nobility; however, he is on the verge of losing his peerage."
"Is it that bad?"
"Currently, the elven titled nobility comprises a Duke, a Marquis and two Earls. Regardless of whether he loses his peerage or loses his nobility, as an elf, I cannot turn a blind eye to this situation. My bad

that this matter has no relation whatsoever to Michio-dono.”

The elven titled nobility includes: the household of the Duke of Harz, the household of the Marquis, Cassia’s family – the Earl of Selmar, and one more Earl.
Being Cassia’s family, it needn’t be mentioned that the Earl of Selmar is an elf.
The Earl of Selmar is an exceptionally ugly, plump man.

“Although we aren’t on particularly good terms with other races, it cannot be termed as discrimination. However, as an elf, I cannot hand it over. I hope you understand.”

If the peerage of the Earl of Selmar were taken over, there’d be a risk of the elven titled nobility shrinking.

I get it.
Because only a noble may have the honor.

In other words, they want me to enter a labyrinth in the territory of Selmar.
However, I’m so busy I would even welcome the help of a cat.
Even though the elven nobles cooperate with each other, everyone is supposed to take care of the labyrinths in their own territory.
There are two more still left in the territory of Harz Duchy.

Otherwise, the labyrinth may become considerably tough.
When a labyrinth opens its entrance, it has 50 floors after which it grows bit by bit.
If it’s left unattended, allowing it to grow nicely, losing peerage won’t be unlikely.
If you think about it, the risk will only increase.

So, is that the emergency situation?
He cannot ask me to go by myself and defeat a labyrinth.
The Duke is aware that I’m a 20s floor Adventurer.
The Duke cannot be this absurd.

Eh?
You don’t mean that, do you?
By any chance, has Gozer been kept away from the strategic

meeting for this reason?

“O-Oh well.”
“I have decided to overthrow the Earl of Selmar.”

“Although he may beg his way out, it’ll essentially be an invasion.”

It’s different.
He plans on overthrowing the Earl of Selmar.
Like overthrowing government? Or hijacking?

Lending a hand will certainly not end at just that.
In this world, the labyrinths born one after another.
A system of continued labyrinth extermination will have to be established.

After present subjugation of the labyrinths in the territory of Selmar, if the extermination weren’t continued, it would lead to the case of the current Earl of Selmar.
It’s a matter of fact to eliminate the root cause.
Are you really going to overthrow?

If the matter of removal were brought up with the Emperor, it would be rejected on the grounds of rivalry. If the scandal leaked out, it would be terrible.
That’s the way how it is in this world, it seems.
It feels like a military coup.

I don’t understand as to what reason the Earl of Selmar has for not defeating the labyrinths.
Or, the reason may be inconsequential.
Overthrowing the Earl of Selmar may win people’s hearts.

In the absence of results, you change the head. For instance, national team coach in case of soccer.
It is terrible to be fired, not metaphorically.
Furthermore, the Earldom is Cassia’s home, the Earl her relative.

When I try to observe Cassia’s state, she was resolutely putting up a front.
Did she know this would happen?
Which reminds me, she did say that she had resolved herself.

“Therefore, I want to borrow Michio-dono’s strength.”

It isn’t about entering the labyrinth in the territory of Selmar.
What is it then?

“Michio-dono once visited the Earl of Selmar together with me.”
“Yes.”
“There was a curtain there with my emblem imprinted.”

During the audience with the Earl of Selmar, there was a curtain with the emblem of the Harz Duchy hanging behind the Earl.
That one?

“Indeed.”
“Can you move there via Field Walk?”

Geh
He intends to use me as a penetration corps?
Even though it’s the invasion of the Earldom of Selmar, in this world, the armies needn’t march to the enemy territory.
Even if it were the Imperial Capital, one could move there via Field Walk.

“Despite the appearance, the Earl of Selmar is an extremely prudent man. In order not to let the Adventurers trespass inside the castle, the shield cement seems to have been abundantly used. Although he doesn’t exterminate the labyrinths, he’s proficient at defending himself. You might think it’d be difficult to invade; however, if it’s Michio-dono breaking into the castle, it’ll be a different matter.”

Have you been devising a plan for such a long time?
It was all for this day that you indebted me with the referral to the Empire Liberation Society.

“In other words, a vanguard?”

As an Adventurer who is supposed to break into the castle of the Earl of Selmar, I will be the first to enter.
An unconditional spearhead.
Can also be called a suicide corps.

“The Earl of Selmar may have guessed; however, I cannot wait day

after night after day. There may be guards on the lookout to some extent but it won't be to the extent of posing a danger. In order not to have the operation leaked outside, meticulous caution has been exercised."

Even Gozer was informed just today.
Even if the tactics were leaked outside, it would be of no use unless the exact time of the decisive action were known.

"Is there no other Adventurer who is able to enter the castle of the Earl of Selmar?"
"I cannot say there's no one else; however, if I relied on someone unreliable, the Earl of Selmar would sniff the operation out."

If the Adventurer, who was asked to break into the castle, had a connection with the Earl of Selmar, they would leak the information.
Or worse yet, betrayed.
It would be less likely if they were a neutral party like me.

"It has already come to light that I'm an Explorer, some sort of countermeasure must have already been taken."
"There's a possibility; still, it won't have any effect on the emblem in the castle. If push comes to shove, you're allowed to produce the proof of trust between the household of the Duke of Harz and the household of the Earl of Selmar. With this, you won't be attacked unknowingly."

So, you intend to use the proof of trust for a completely contradictory purpose?
Nasty.

"Is it alright to use the proof?"
"It's an extremely last resort. You should be able to deal with the minor injuries by yourself. Better yet if you use it in front of a member of the Earl of Selmar's household. This household and the household of the Earl of Selmar have a deep bond of trust."
"Trust, huh?"

More like selfishness.
However, it doesn't absolve the household of the Earl of Selmar.
Do you want to remove the current Earl of Selmar and replace him

with a substitute Earl?

“In the worst case, I and Cassia will make a run to the emblem in the castle of the Earl of Selmar. You don’t have to be worried about it being of no use.”
“Won’t you need an Adventurer to do that.”
“The Adventurer who came here with Cassia has seen the curtain, too. I just cannot use them this time.”
“It’ll be troublesome, huh?”

After the marriage, there was an Adventurer who came with Cassia.
For when she needs to go back home.
In other words, they’re someone on the Earl of Selmar’s side.
If they were sent as a vanguard, there’s a likelihood of their betraying.

“If you accept, I’ll reward you within my capacity. You may decline, of course. I’ll guarantee you freedom of choice. However, if you decline, you’ll be confined to this room until the execution of the operation.”

Is that why you led us to this room?
With there being a custom of no one leaving the conference room until the conference is over, no one will suspect even if we don’t come out for a long time.

“After I have moved to the other side, what then?”
“During the first transfer, you’ll take a few Adventurers of the order of knights there. After that, you’ll have to make a few more round trips. However, I don’t intend to have Michio-dono fight. As an elf, I’ll do what an elf has to do by myself.”
“Just transfer?”
“There’s always that 1 in 10,000 chance, so I cannot guarantee you safety. Please bear that in mind.”

Does the Duke want me to help him or decline him?
But then, if it were fail-safe, not taking it up would rather be better.
It would be dangerous, don’t you think?

Like the Duke said, even if he’s aware of the risk of invasion through the emblem curtain, it’ll be impractical for him to deploy a defense

unit there at all times.
If he had such a war potential, he would put it to use in the labyrinth.
If he did, he wouldn't be in the situation where he could be removed.

However, there are other methods available, too.
When no one is deployed, the room can be filled with the poisonous gas.
Firewood can be set ablaze in front of the curtain, so whoever came out would fall into it.
A sword can be set in front of the curtain, so whoever came out would be pierced.

However, because it can allow one to escape in a contingency, they won't do such a thing.
Still, it's not absolutely safe.
I'd better decline him.
If I accepted, I would be invading Cassia's home.

"It's a noble's obligation to exterminate the labyrinths. Because he didn't perform his duty, there's no other choice."

When I try to observe Cassia's state, she speaks decisively.

"In case Michio-dono declines, I'll have to invade from the front which will result in casualties in the household of the Earl of Selmar."

So, he requested me because he was concerned about Cassia?
Is there no way out?

"I ask of you, please."
"I understand. The moment I came here, I had already boarded the sailing ship."

With Cassia asking of me, I have no other choice but to accept.
Provided there's no sword set up in front of the curtain.

Chapter 186 - Arrangements

“I am grateful. As expected of Michio-dono. Just as I expected.”

I agree to the role of vanguard for the invasion of the Earl of Selmar’s castle upon which the Duke is pleased.
I am not doing this for you, Bastard.
It is for Cassia’s sake.
B-Bastard, It isn’t for you.

Sherry’s face suggests her unease; however, she doesn’t plan on interrupting.
Probably because the other party is the Duke.

“Oh well. I will take care of it, somehow.”

In order for Sherry to hear, I speak optimistically.
Roxanne doesn’t seem to be worried at all. Maybe because she has confidence in me?
Has she never had a thought that she is overestimating my ability?

“The sortie will be tonight, so I cannot offer you sake; however, you can eat and drink until you are full.”

Is this what staying overnight was for?
I admit, though, that his preparations are good.
Since there is no sake, it will be impossible to sortie while drunk.
Is this why he didn’t arrange for the Dwarf Killer this time?

There is no helping it.
Should I at least eat to relieve the stress?

“Your Highness, Gozer here.”

After having indulged myself in eating for a while, a knock comes from outside followed by a voice.
It is Gozer.
The moment Gozer left on account of emergency, the Duke created all sorts of troubles for me.

It really isn't good for me when Gozer isn't around.

"Gozer, is that you? I will open the door. Don't enter."

The Duke stands up and heads to the door personally.
Does it mean if he enters the conference room, the meeting will come to an end?
Speaking of which, till when are we not allowed to leave?
Will we be on house arrest until the operation has been executed late night?

The Duke opens the door.
On the other side of the door is Gozer standing alone.

"Operation SE-2 is progressing smoothly 'just according to keikaku'. About 80% of the personnel have already been contacted. They have begun assembling here."

Gozer reports in low voice.
I could hear him well, though.
He receives the report with his chest filled with pride. The Duke is after all a Duke.
Even if it is rotten, it is still a sea bream.

"Since the plan was a sudden occurrence, it might be difficult to get in touch with everyone. 80% would suffice."
"However, there is one problem."
"What is it?"
"Well…"

Gozer hesitates while looking toward me with a complicated expression.
Apparently, it is something he doesn't want the outsiders to hear.

"It is alright. Michio-dono has agreed to lend us a hand."
"Michio-dono has?"
"Michio-dono has visited the Earl of Selmar's place before."

He didn't tell Gozer that he dragged me there, it seems.
Had he told Gozer, he wouldn't have given me that dubious look.

"Is that so?"

Gozer looks at me with the eyes that contained pity.
As if the man of the world has found a companion.
I'm certain that Gozer is subjected to the Duke's manipulation everyday.

"So, what is the matter that is troubling you?"
"Actually."

Since Gozer's voice was low, I didn't get much of what he said thereafter.
It was full of names.
Someone went to someplace. That's how it went.

There appears to have been a slip up while circulating the emergency summons.
A miss? An accident?

"Then, it would be better to start ahead of schedule."
"I guess."
"As soon as the minimum number of people has assembled, we will execute the operation. Excluding Michi-dono, that would be 44."
"I understand."

With a decision having been made, Gozer leaves.
The Duke closes the door and returns to his seat.

"I am sorry. There was a need for a small modification to the tactics. It may start earlier."
"Did something happen to my younger brother?"

When the Duke sits down, Cassia asks.
Apparently, Cassia managed to hear her younger brother's full name in Gozer's report which was full of full names.

"Nope, nothing happened to him."
"Really?"

Cassia heaves a sigh of relief.

"Cassia's younger brother is her cousin. He is next in line to become the Earl of Selmar."

The Duke looks at me and explains.
He is her cousin even though she said younger brother?

Naturally, Cassia's cousin means he is a member of the Earl of Selmar's household.

He meets the qualification to succeed the title, I guess.
Even though he said he would invade the Earldom of Selmar, he doesn't seem to be intent on destroying it. He plans on merely reshuffling the top.
Or, installing a capable person as a puppet, perhaps?

"He will be the next Earl of Selmar?"
"For that, I have to have him participate this time by raising his army. However, when an Adventurer from the order of my knights visited him, there were other people together with him. It would have been better had they been unrelated; however, they were someone connected to the Earl of Selmar. For what reason would a member of the order of my knights visit a relative of the Earl of Selmar? Any smart person would figure the reason out."
"And, due to that, you want to have it carried out as soon as possible?"

Since there is a likelihood of the other side noticing it, we need to start earlier before they get the chance to prepare, huh?
Since even Gozer didn't know the exact time of the decisive action, I don't think Cassia's cousin knew either.
Since he didn't know, he could accidentally be with anyone at that time.
Isn't the Duke's unpredictability responsible for this?

"As an insurance, I planned on waiting till they fell asleep; however, that option is no longer available. As soon as minimum preparations have been done, we will break into the Earl of Selmar's castle. Onward from this point of time, there shouldn't be any significant problem . For it is night, there shouldn't be any audience taking place. Also, since the territory of Selmar isn't far from here, you don't have to be worried about the time variation."

It would have been better had we invaded late at night as we would have had to face a small number of people due to the most of them

being asleep.
The earlier we start, the more the risk; however, it is still better than the information leaking.
There doesn't seem to be any need to consider the time difference with the territory of Selmar.

"Your Highness."

For a second time, comes a knock on the door followed by Gozer's voice.

"Gozer?"
"I bring news."
"Are the preparations done?"
"Everything is ready."

Once he heard that, the Duke draws his Ocihalcum Sword.
After lightly nodding toward me, which surprised me, he opens the door.
On the other side of the door, there are two more men beside Gozer.
One is a knight whom I have met before.

"It has been a long time."
"T-This?"

The other man is already surprised.
If you see the Duke holding the sword the moment the door opens, you will of course be surprised.
The man looks at Cassia as if asking her something but Cassia shakes her head.

"I will go straight to the point. I would like for you to become the next Earl."

You haven't even discussed it with him beforehand!
He is going to persuade him right here, it seems.
In other words, this poor soul, who has been brought over, is Cassia's cousin.

Were the talks supposed to be held tonight?
In order to avert the uproar since it would be a hit or miss?

Unfortunately, he cannot declare that he is in conflict with others.

There is a chance that he would refuse after the talks were held.
He must be worried that the information would leak to the Earl of Selmar if he refused.
Or worse yet, instead of refusing, he pretended to be helping and betrayed at the last moment.
So then, did he choose not to discuss it with him beforehand?

He won't have the opportunity to inform the Earl of Selmar if he discusses it with him right now.
If he opposes, he can be restrained until it is over.
And, even if he tries to double-cross, he won't have the time to prepare.

"Are you……going to kill the Earl?"

He squeezes these words out as his face turns pale.
His face really has turned pale.
All his blood seems to have drained.
Without saying a word, the Duke nods exaggeratedly.

"You knew this would happen eventually, so pull yourself together."

Insists Cassia, calling out to the man.

"That……but-"

He knows it well.
Is it such a disgraceful matter for a noble to not be able to subjugate a labyrinth?
Is it natural for them to be overthrown?

By the same token, the Earl of Selmar must be expecting this.
He must know he is in danger since it is natural for him to be overthrown.
Nah. Had he had enough war potential, he would have put it to use in the labyrinths already.

"I hope you understand."
"However, if you do such a thing."
"Even though it is unofficial, I have received the approval from the

elven supreme delegate council. As for why it is unofficial, it is only because the Earl of Selmar is a member, too. Rather, it is on request of the council. If the number of Earls diminished, it would be troublesome for all the elves; however, everything will work out if you become the next Earl."

He had already set the groundwork, it seems.
The invasion doesn't seem to be for the Duke's selfish reasons.

"With this, there is room for talks……"
"You can consider yourself elected by the council. If you form an alliance with me, the damage will be kept to the minimum. Do you accept?"
"Y-Yes."

The Duke forcibly makes him accept it.
It is more like a threat since he is holding his sword.

"You must not forget your responsibilities as a noble."

With her cousin having been forced, Cassia talks to him.
Is she trying to comfort him?

"Then, until the operation has been executed, I would like you to stay in this room."
"I will summon warriors, too."
"Unfortunately, we don't have much time. To relieve you of your worries, I will have you work fully once we are inside the castle."

The Duke refuses his offer.
It is logical. There would be a risk of the Earl of Selmar getting the wind of it if he summoned his companions.
Also, he seems to be making him join nominally.
He might perhaps have been a hindrance.

"Everyone will soon be gathered."

One of the knights comes running in and reports at the entrance to the room.

"We will be heading out soon."
"Okay."

After having received the Duke's reply, he heads back.

"Then, this marks the end of today's meeting. You will be able to leave the room but only afterward. Cassia, can I ask of you to keep watch over the people gathered here who were with the Earl of Selmar during our wedding? They will soon notice the abnormality."
"I will go to the castle, too."
"Of course you will; however, not as a vanguard. For now, the priority is not to let the information leak to the opposition."
"Understood."

The Duke first takes Cassia out of the room.
She will possibly not participate in the battle since he asked of her to keep watch.
It would be harsh on her if he made her invade her own house.

"Should we be going, too?"
"Michio-dono, everyone, here."

Gozer beckons us.
We follow behind him.
The room we have been led to is the same room where Roxanne had the duel before.
There are a lot of people in the room.

The air is different from how it usually is inside the Bode castle.
The air is tense.
Isn't it expected? We are invading, after all?
For light, instead of candles in lanterns, braziers[W] are being used.

"Let me explain the tactics in a simple manner. First, you will move to the castle along with the people assembled here. This time, we will be taking down the Earl of Selmar alone. You will approach from the front and announce that. It will reduce the resistance from the Earl's side. If the resistance weakened, the achievement would be credited to you."

The Duke turns to the next Earl and explains.
He does want to minimize the use of force, it seems.
It would really leave a bad aftertaste if you raised your hand against your own. Also, this way, it will be easier for Cassia's cousin to act.

The resistance from the Earl's side will surely weaken if a member of his own family turns against him.

"I will do my best."

Although he appears stout hearted, I am not sure as to how much influence can this man, whose position I don't know, demonstrate.

"Availing that opportunity, Michio-dono will make his move after which will be my turn. I will make quick inroads and seize the control of the castle."

He hasn't told him about moving to the emblem or, for that matter, given any other detail.
I wonder if he still doesn't trust this relative of the Earl of Selmar fully

It has been decided that I will take with me a group the order of knights Adventurers.
After visiting once, the order of knights Adventurers will be able to move to the emblem by themselves next time.
Grabbing the chance created by the commotion instigated by this man at the front, the control will be seized in one fell swoop from the back.

"Very well."
"If you are content with using simple equipment, you can use the ones prepared here."
"Thank you very much."

The man leaves the place, accompanied by a member of the order of knights.

"Would Michio-dono like to use these equipment?"
"No, I already have some in my Item Box."

I have the sword, gloves and hat inside my Item Box.
I am wearing a hard leather armor.
It is a precaution for contingency.

"Alright then, you can wait here for a while."

The Duke tries to depart with Gozer.

“Wait, please. I would like to accompany my Master during the first transfer.”

Roxanne stops them.

“Roxanne, you will?”
“Yes.”

Without thinking, I nod and answer.

“What do you mean?”

The Duke halts and enquires.

“The place where Master is going is not absolutely safe, is it?”
“Yes, you may be right.”
“I won’t let Master go to that kind of a place alone. I will go with him and protect him by all means.”

Roxanne continues to speak.
Even though she has been silent ever since we came here.
She is bold.

“But the number of people.”

The Duke seems to be at a loss.
It may not be easy for him to change the tactics on a whim.
If I took 5 Adventurers first, we could take 36 people next.
However, if Roxanne joined, we would only be able to take 30 people next.

This is a chance, nonetheless.
I can propose the idea I have.

“Then, how about I go on scouting before we execute the operation?”
“Scouting?”
“If there are people lying in wait, we will be able to find out once I go. It will be fine if it is only Roxanne and me. Also, it will allow Roxanne to rest at ease. With this, there will be no change in the tactics.”

I take advantage of Roxanne’s suggestion.

The purpose is for us to go alone.
There is no need to stupidly move to the emblem via [Field Walk].
If we go alone, I can use [Warp].

There will be no problem in moving even to the throne room.
I can move there via [Warp] even if they have shield cement applied to the walls.
Even if they have trap devices set up around the emblem, there will be no problem if I enter from somewhere else.

Chapter 187 - Delivery

“But that-”

When I suggest to go on reconnaissance alone, the Duke’s expression turns bitter.
Even Gozer didn’t have complete information regarding this day, even the next Earl wasn’t told anything about the plan until later, just so as not to let the information leak. How can he allow only us to have our way?
If I were intending to betray him, it would be when I move to the emblem with the Adventurers.
Just this is what the Duke, who isn’t an Adventurer, cannot do.

“It will be fine to initiate the operation immediately after we return. And, if we don’t, you can abandon the operation as it would mean that we failed.”
“It will be dangerous.”
“The danger is all the same. Besides, if we fail, you will be able to walk away without losing any of the Adventurer knights.”

I explain the merit to the Duke.

“I don’t plan on using Michio-dono and then throw him away.”
“I know that.”
“There is a possibility that they will be on lookout.”
“It may be possible for us to take care of it. Also, it won’t take much time to go back after I come back. Even if the Earl of Selmar found us, he wouldn’t have the time to prepare in order to intercept us.”

It means that I will be making three round trips, though, instead of two.
Won’t it take more time?
I have no choice but cheat my way through.

“If the guards find you, they will remove the emblem.”

The Duke points out something which I didn’t think about.
Because I was intending to use [Warp], I didn’t plan on moving to the

drop curtain.
However, since the Duke doesn't know that, he probably believes that I will enter through the emblem.
If the guards were on lookout and they saw someone appearing out of the Harz Duchy emblem, their first action would be removing it.

"Then, I will be the only one to return."
"It is alright. If we go on reconnaissance first, I will be safe, too."

Roxanne, nice cover.

"I won't have the time to betray you or plot anything since I am just going there and coming right back. And, if I do betray you or we don't return, you can simply abandon the operation."

He must be concerned about my betraying him, so I have to quash his concerns.

"You are right. Then, I will send someone with you. It is just in case since we don't know as to what is going on at the other side."

The Duke seems to be inclined toward preliminary reconnaissance, too.
However, we have no other choice but to go alone.
I won't be able to [Warp] with someone else.

"If something really were there, more people going there wouldn't be a good idea. It would also put constraints on us. Therefore, it would be best for us to go alone. It would also be easier for us to cooperate if we did. The more the number of people, the more the damage. We wouldn't be able to do our best if we were to worry about others; especially, if the others were the Duke's capable people. It would be putting the cart before the horse."
"I see. Err, very well. Then, I will have Michio-dono and his party go on reconnaissance."

I have received the Duke's permission.
What a relief.
We will now be able to go ahead safely.
After having given permission, the Duke leaves without issuing any other instruction.

Since it will only be us, I pass Roxanne and the rest their equipment.
Roxanne and the others' equipment are inside my Item Box.
Because I expected something like this would happen.

No way.
The jackets and Platemail aren't inside my Item Box.
Roxanne and the girls had taken them for maintenance after we left the labyrinth, so they are still in the room.
I didn't expect something like this would happen.

Although the swords and hats are inside, the other equipment are very few.
As for the body equipment, there is only Alba inside.
I cannot put it on, though, since it is a Wizard equipment.

Roxanne is Shrine Maiden, isn't she?
Or, should I borrow the equipment from the order of knights, perhaps?
Well, Roxanne and the girls will most likely be fine even without the equipment.

The Duke is concerned about the danger; however, I am not that worried.
Especially, since we won't enter through the emblem.
Besides, it is equally possible for us to not get found by the guards, isn't it?

If the room were lit with braziers like the ones here and there were a lot of people on lookout, we would most likely be discovered; however, I cannot bring myself to entertain this possibility.
I could believe it if he knew about the day of the decisive action; however, if he had capable people at his disposal, he would send them to the labyrinth rather than having them stand guard every night.

If they were focused on the emblem, they would miss when someone appeared out of a dark corner.
Even if the guards were on lookout, they wouldn't necessarily be inside but keeping watch inside from the entrance, so I'd better [Warp] to the wall opposite the entrance.
The problem is, what to report when I return. That there were

guards but I managed to slip past them when they were looking the other way?

If there were a sword pointing at the emblem, I could just kick it away and return.
The problem would be when there were guards on lookout along with the trap. I would have no choice but to deal with the guards.
However, the trap is supposed to be a substitute for the guards, so the likelihood of the set (both) isn't much.

The problem is, what would I do if the emblem were removed?
It will be a pinch for although I can move via [Warp], it isn't possible with [Field Walk].
If I moved the first time, it wouldn't be possible for me to say that I cannot move again.
How would I cheat my way through that?

One solution would be to flee, never to see the Duke and the others again.
If it went well, they could just come to the conclusion that we were defeated.
However, it would differ from the testimony of the Earl of Selmar's side.

If it would differ anyway, shouldn't it be better to just scurry away if we were found by the guards?
Even if they removed the emblem after that, there would be no problem.
The problem is, how would I falsify the conflict in the testimony afterward?

Because someone may visit during the day, they will most likely not remove the emblem which is a symbol of trust.
If they were to remove it, they would remove it at night when no one should be coming.
However, there is a possibility that they forgot to remove it tonight.
If I insist that the contact person is lying to deceive us, the discrepancy in the testimony can be restricted to tolerable limit.

If the guards were kicked out of the way, everything would be solved even if the emblem were removed.

There would be no testimony if the guards were defeated.
The future will take care of itself.
It would be assumed that they died after removing the curtain.

In other words, if the emblem were removed but the guards were absent, there would be no choice but to catch someone from somewhere and make them out to be the guard.
My thoughts have been quite dark for a while now.
It cannot be helped.
I cannot think of any other way.

Lending a hand to a military campaign is such a thing.
The Duke, Cassia, Roxanne and the others understand that, too.
Although I am sad, this is a war.

“Everyone, take these.”
“Okay.”

I hand everyone a weapon and hat since I have those with me.
I also prepare Durandal.

“Where we are going now, there is a room with a drop curtain. I would like to check what is going on in there. However, if someone is in there, run away. I would like to avoid the battle as much as possible. If I draw my hand, it will be the signal to retreat.”

After ensuring that no one was around, I issue instructions.
If someone heard us, they would find the instructions of moving to the emblem curtain via [Field Walk] and checking around ridiculously strange.
As for the battle, I will engage depending on the situation. If it is unavoidable, I will be the only one to engage.
If they were keeping watch on the emblem from outside, I would quietly return.

“All the preparations required should be done soon. Is everyone ready?”

Finally, the Duke stands up in the innermost part of the room where the equipment were arranged.

“It looks fine.”

Gozer, who is standing next to the Duke, says after the clatter calms down.

“Ladies and gentlemen, I will have you know the details of the operation. This operation is just; it has received the approval from the All Elven Supreme Delegate Council. Negligence and cowardice is a crime against peace and prosperity; it will never be permitted. The objective of this battle is to make amends, so don’t falter. Fight bravely and secure a noble victory. The future rests on your shoulders. For the glory of the households of the Duke of Harz and the Earl of Selmar. Ladies and gentlemen, I expect you to put earnest effort.”

The members of the order of knights shout in unison.
Is the Duke capable of delivering such a motivational speech?
It is surprising and unexpected. However, it is to be expected of a duke.

“Then, we will scout first.”

We proceed to the innermost part.
Inside is a large drop curtain.
It must be in order to use [Field Walk].

“Michio-dono, please move carefully. I would like you to think about your own safety first. I will shoulder all the responsibility no matter what happens.”
“Yes.”

I am pretty sure he wanted to say a lot of things. I am glad he didn’t.
Having been encouraged by the Duke, I stand in front of the curtain.
There are a lot of people preparing for the operation inside the room.
Due to it being noisy inside, there won’t be any problem with chanting the skill incantation.

Using [Field Walk] incantation as a disguise, I cast [Warp].
I move to the Earl of Selmar’s castle.
It is the audience room which has the emblem.

The room I arrive at is dark.

It is different from the Bode castle. It is pitch dark with no sound.
I am grateful that there is no one standing guard; however, I cannot see a thing.
I don't even know if the drop curtain is here or not.

"No one seems to be here."

Roxanne reports in a low voice.
Is Roxanne able tell if someone is here or not by the smell?
Unlike contemporary Japan, there is no infrared surveillance camera or recorder microphone here.
We don't have to worry about getting discovered if there is no one around.

"Curtain, desu."

I hear Miria's whisper.
Apparently, Miria can see it.

"Is there anything strange or suspicious about the curtain?"
"Not, desu."

I am not sure whether I entered through the Harz Duchy emblem or not but there is no helping it.
Since it seems fine, I decide to head back.
I remove Durandal and disband the party.
There is no need to chant Party Formation incantation if I do it here.

There doesn't seem to be any guard or trap in this room.
The Earl of Selmar doesn't seem to be alert.
We were unnecessarily cautious.
He would put them to use in the labyrinth if he could afford to deploy guards.

"Michio-dono."
"It looks alright."

Once I return to Bode, I tell the Duke, relieving his worries.
At almost the same time, I receive Party Invitation.
His preparations are excellent.

"Really?"

“Well then.”

This time around, I chant [Field Walk] incantation and go back to the Earl of Selmar’s castle.
One of the party members is holding a lantern.
The room brightens up a bit. So, no one is here, after all.

Roxanne and the girls are safe and sound, too.
Strangely, however, they are on the side of the room, not by the drop curtain.
At this point, though, I don’t think anyone would mind it.
I head back to the Bode castle shortly after.

“Then, I will be going.”
“I am expecting a lot from you.”
“Leave it to me.”

When I come back, Cassia’s cousin, the next Earl, was ready to embark.
I change back to moving via [Field Walk].
Because he is supposed to approach from the front, he will move to the lobby.
It is his duty to instigate commotion.

“Michio-dono, I will be heading out next, please.”

As soon as the Adventurer disbands the party, the Duke calls out to me.
Five people, including the Duke, line up in front of me.

“Okay.”

I chant Party Formation incantation and invite the people in front of me one by one.
It really takes quite some time to add five people.
Meanwhile, several other parties had moved already.
Those were the parties with Explorers.

Did the Explorer create a party beforehand and invite the Adventurer, whom I took with me, once they came back in order to transfer immediately?
Like this, the time needed for preparation can be reduced.

The tactics for the operation seem to be precise.

“Disband the party once we are there. I want you to stand by. Or, you can come back here with your party members. They should stay in this room.”

The Duke gives me the next instructions.
By party members, he probably means Roxanne and the girls.
There is no reason for them to stay at the other side.
It would get dangerous there if the Earl of Selmar launched the counterattack.

After assembling the party, I move back again to the Earl of Selmar’s castle.
The room is bright and a little noisy.
The pitch dark and quiet room, which I was in before, seems like a lie now.

After I disband the party, the Duke vigorously storms out of the room.
The other parties seem to be deploying sequentially, too.
I have no idea as to what is going on outside the room.
I don’t even know if there is a battle taking place or not.

Nevertheless, since he has deployed considerable forces, he can advance prevalently.
The mobility is overwhelming.
The Adventurers are a great power.
With this many Adventurers, the might of the order of Harz knights is absolute in this world.

For the Duke has left, I create a party with Roxanne and the girls.
The Duke’s army has already left the audience room. We are merely passersby.
There is no one paying attention to us.

Availing this lucky chance, I quickly create the party.
It gets done immediately for there was no need to chant incantation.

“I still have some work. Roxanne, everyone, you will head back and wait there. I will take you back right now.”

If I gave them a choice, Roxanne would insist to remain here with me.
So, I force them to evacuate.
It will be safer there than here.

When I return to the Bode castle, Cassia was inside the room.
She seems to want to go there as well.
Instead of a dress, she has attired herself in the battle gear.
Unfortunately, another Adventurer seems to have been assigned the task.

Cassia and her party moves.
I, too, move back to the Earl of Selmar's castle immediately after.
I wonder as to how many times I have moved.
Four?

Cassia's party was about to leave the audience room.
As they were about to leave the room, they suddenly stop.
The Duke enters from outside.

"Cassia, it is alright. The operation is progressing smoothly. Oh, you have made it back, Michio-dono? Thanks to you, Michio-dono, there have been no major losses to our side as well as the Earl of Selmar's."

The operation seems to be progressing smoothly.
This can be said to be the most crucial stage.
However, it looks fine.

The Duke has a young woman following behind him.
Her overwhelming beauty is engendering an elegant air.
Is she one of the women working at the Earl of Selmar's castle?

She is a beauty that resembles Cassia.
Like Cassia, she is extremely beautiful even amongst the elves.
Somehow, she looks slightly younger than Cassia.

"Rutina!"

Shouts Cassia after seeing her.

Chapter 188 - Rutina

Cassia called out to the girl the Duke brought out.
She is called Rutina apparently.

“Cassia-ane, sama……”

Rutina spoke one word, and then cut off her words in vexation.
She is probably one of the people originally from this castle.
It seems she considers Cassia a sister, but it is more enemy than friend right now.
Rutina’s stubborn expression is showing that.

“I am glad you are safe.”
“……Nope.”

She is unharmed, but if you are asking if she is safe then I doubt she is.
Cassia hugs Rutina tightly.
It’s fascinating how the two beauties resemble each and stand out above everyone else.
It is a beautiful scene, but it is not the right time to think like this, right?

“Your Excellency.”

Gozar came over.

“How is it going?”
“We have almost taken control of the whole castle, there was no resistance. However, we can’t find the Earl.”
“No one knows where he is?”
“That’s right.”

The Duke and Gozar are talking.
It looks like they can’t find Selmar’s Earl.
Maybe he happened to be out on trip today by chance.
Because they decided on today on a whim.

“It is not like I can’t do anything if he disappears, but it’s troublesome. It is also a disgrace for a noble to run away from his castle. Use everything we have to search for him.”
“Understood.”

It is easy for Adventurers to get away in this world.
You can go somewhere good.
I will run away instead of hiding, but it looks like he can’t do that?

How dishonorable is it to escape?
But since he already neglected his labyrinth suppression duty as a noble, I don’t think he cares about his honor as a noble.
Or is it not related to this?

“I am sorry, but we can’t find the Earl. Do you have any idea where he is?”

The Duke asks Rutina.
Maybe he’s hiding with the firewood?
I want to strike a war drum while the Duke gives commands.
While doing one, two, three hits.

“I don’t know, and I would not tell you even if I knew.”

Rutina responds plainly.
Rutina is a heavenly beauty.

“……Cassia, do you know any places where he could be hiding?”
“Let me see. There is a room to store firewood in the winter season, and the bedroom is connected to it.”
“Ane-Sama!”

Rutina protests, but Cassia is a friend of the enemy.
Was there really a firewood shed?

“I hope you didn’t forget your responsibility as noble.”
“But.”
“You know what’s been going on while you live in luxury.”

Rutina hesitates from Cassia’s argument.
It seems Rutina understands that the labyrinth subjection is not advancing at all.

“Gozar!”
“Yes.”

The Duke sends Gozar to check it out.

“When father inherited the title he tried his best. But, he didn’t manage to get any results and changing the leadership of the knights became a common thing. Then, that big group of thieves ran wildly and we lost some capable subordinates. At that time he even drank sake in order to run away.”

It seems that the Earl had reasons for the slow subjugation..
Can’t he just switch out with someone else?

“Was he cornered that much?”
“If only I had more power.”
“It’s alright. There’s nothing you could have done.

Cassia embraced Rutina’s head to console her.

“It’s not like I want ane-sama’s sympathy.”

Rutina brushed the hand away.
She is quite aggressive.
She is glaring at Cassia with beautiful deep blue eyes.
It’s as if she is holding back her tears.

“Your father wasn’t suitable to become Earl in the first place. He avoided fighting scenes, and didn’t want to enter the labyrinth. Because he was the youngest brother, he wouldn’t normally become the Earl, and he might have lived freely. But because my father and the next youngest brother fought each other, this is how things turned out. Because of the conflicts of my father I want to apologize to you.”

It looks like Cassia’s father and Rutina’s father are brothers.
In other words, Cassia and Rutina are cousins.
That reminds me, the next Earl called Cassia big sister as well.
Is it family tradition of Selmar’s Earl house for cousins to call each other brothers and sisters?

“Enough already. Go ahead and kill me.”

Rutina swung her golden hair and faced the Duke.
He is going to kill her?
It is one of the top five words that I don't want the beautiful elf to receive.
But now is not the time to think about it.

"There is no need to go that far, if possible I would like resolve this peacefully."

Like I thought, the Duke doesn't intend to do that.
It is enough to just defeat the Earl.

"Don't talk nonsense to me after coming this far."
"I would like you to waive your inheritance rights."
"I am the daughter of the Earl, and I can't abandon that. Assuming my father was removed, it is natural that I will inherit the title after him."

It is like this after all.

"The next Earl has already been decided. We need to do it as soon as possible."
"I have the inheritance rights. The next Earl after my father should be me."

I have trouble following them, but it looks like it will be hard for Cassia's cousin to become the next Earl when Rutina is still around.
Looks like the branch family can't take the title when there is a direct descendant.
When Rutina abandons her rights, the title of Earl can move to the next family.
If the Earl is removed like this, Rutina would be the next Earl.

"That is not acceptable. Unfortunately, the high elf representative council does not recognize you."
"That can't be… Even the high elf representative council……"
"It is natural after the labyrinths have been left to grow here, and it isn't something that can be solved just by Selmar's Earl losing his title, it is a betrayal against all elves. Of course, his daughter will not be allowed the right of succession, and there is the matter of you being too young. "

That reminds me, Rutina was 15 years old when I appraised her.
She is young.
And she is Villager Lv2.
Low.

You want to say her abilities as Earl is unknown because she is 15 years old?
And she is Villager Lv2 as well.
The subjugation of the labyrinths in the territory is not advancing, so it is necessary to immediately put things in order so that the subjugation advances as fast as possible.
People will feel uneasy without a leader with some experience and achievements.

However, the high elves representative council doesn't leave good impression.
Is it like an evil council ruling from behind?
Or is that just my own point of view as a third party?
Apparently Selmar's Earl is a member, and probably the Duke is as well.

Or rather, isn't my presence here not needed anymore for a while now.
It is not like I can interfere.
But I can't leave since I was told to stand by here.
And I don't want to go outside the room since I don't know what is going on outside.

"That's why, I told you to go ahead and kill me already."

Rutina insists strongly.
There is no need to worry about succession rights if he kills her.

"It turned out like this after all, but I can't do that."
"Rutina, even if it's just to take revenge on us who are your parents enemies, please live on."
"I will not kill you. I will have you become a slave."

The Duke interrupts Cassia who was trying to persuade her.

"A slave?"

“Michio, do you know about legitimate succession names?”

Despite Cassia’s question, the Duke starts talking to me.

“I have only heard the name.”
“The nobility comes with the family name and legitimate succession name which give you the succession rights. Anharth in my case. This can be shown using the intelligence card, which isn’t a problem. If you lose your legitimate succession name, you will lose your succession rights and nobility. The legitimate succession name is that kind of thing. And the legitimate succession name is lost if you become a slave.”
“And that’s the need to become a slave.”

The Duke’s name is Brocken・Nord Brown・Anharth.
Similarly, Anselm is part of Rutina’s name, I wonder if that’s it.
I believe Baron Easter has something attached to his name as well.
Cassia is Anselm just like Rutina, so she has succession rights for Selmar’s Earl and not the Duke.

“It is possible to select the next successor regardless of the succession rights, but it is an emergency now. The direct descendant will be given priority when Selmar’s Earl is overthrown.”
“That’s why you need to lose your succession name.”
“It is still the same thing. I will not become a slave. I didn’t commit any crime. You shouldn’t be able to make me a slave without my consent.”

Is it possible to make someone a slave without his consent if he doesn’t commit a crime?
Probably someone with the thief job can be forcefully made a slave.
If not, the person need to give his consent.

I have thief job.
Is it possible to make me a slave without my consent?

“You know yourself I can’t do that. You don’t have the ability to fulfill your obligations as noble, and you don’t have any other way, what kind of future would your younger brothers and sisters face? It is not a problem that can be solved with your death. If you became a slave there would be no need to hunt for the rest of your siblings. It can be

explained that you have taken responsibility for things as a noble. That will be the best for your younger brothers and sisters."
"C… coward."

The Duke attacks her weak point, he really is cowardly.
Her younger brothers and sisters are hostages?
There's no way of changing that her father the Earl will be dethroned, but her younger brothers and sisters are different.

Parents eat sour grapes and children lose teeth, it is called something like this.
Kuranosuke Oishi's eldest child Chikara committed harakiri together with him, but it is said that the government demanded that the remaining orphaned siblings go into service.
It is similar to this.
Rather, wouldn't Rutina's younger brothers and sisters have no home to return to if she abandons her rights?

"They will not be able to use their succession name until they become of age at 15 years old, but depending on their older sister's action, there is possibility for the younger brothers and sisters to become Selmar's Earl in the future."

Seems it is useless for biological children to claim rights when they are minors.
You just have to deal with Rutina somehow?
The Duke is quite nasty.

He didn't confirm whether her younger brothers and sisters will have the right of succession or not.
Perhaps it wouldn't work without it.
Like Komon Mito who adopted his older brother child and gave his own child to the adopted child of his older brother, because after the real father adopted a child, a child was born to the grandfather, the child became the legitimate child of the father, and Tooyama no kane became the adopted child of the adopted child of the father.

Being noble seems to have it's troubles.
The Duke did mention the possibility for siblings though.
He is not telling a lie.

“I also think that will be good, Rutina.”
“……I understand, just do as you like.”

Cassia also tries to persuade her, and Rutina finally gave in.
It is a big thing to have obtained a hostage.

“Michio.”
“Yes?”
“If it is good with you, can you accept her.”

When I thought the matter was finally settled, the Duke suggest something outrageous.

“What?”
“Michio, you’ve done us a great favor this time, I believe she will make a great prize.”
“W… what absurd thing are you talking about?”

Cassia was the one to object.
It is expected of course.

Expected?
So you agreed on the matter of her becoming a slave.
Oh, was it acceptable if she became your possession?

“Michio seems he have abilities that me and others can’t comprehend. Probably in the near future he will defeat a labyrinth, and join the ranks of nobility. If this happens, you will be able to make a lot of achievements even as a former noble.”

The Duke tells Rutina.
For what kind of reason does the Duke evaluate me so high?
It’s an overestimate.
Did he happen to see me using magic inside the labyrinth by any chance?

“A labyrinth?”

Rutina looks suspicious.
Her eyes were looking to evaluate me.

“It is the result of what the adventurers of my knight’s order tried to

do. It is impossible to move to Palmasque without recovery medicine as we thought, and you also need to rest at Tare while using recovery medicine. He certainly has an ability that is far superior to my knight's order adventurers, and we can't measure how much strength he has."
"Oh really?"

He probably tried to go to Palmasque himself.
And he compared it like that.
In fact, it is even hard for me to go to Palmasque without recovery medicine or Durandal.
It doesn't look like he saw me using magic, I'll settle for that.

"I don't think she is a bad reward, Michio. As you can see, she is a beauty that resembles Cassia."

What does he mean by that? This Duke.
Is he simply praising her?
Possibly, did he see through how fond I am of Cassia?
Was I looking at Cassia with such eyes?

"N..no. Ah, no. It is not like that."

Both Rutina and Cassia are beautiful women.
There is no doubt.

Or did you even ask Baron Ester?
That reminds me, the laws of the Empire Liberation Society don't allow the leak of information that they obtained there to the outside.
Because the duke is a member of the Empire Liberation Society, he would not mention it outside even if he found out.
Maybe just some gossip got out.

Chapter 189 - Motive

Somehow, the Duke is aware of my having the hots for Cassia.
Thinking back, the Duke has been excessively flaunting his relationship with Cassia a lot lately.
He really has figured it out?

“Since she is of noble birth, she has undertaken the ordeal to become a Wizard. She will be quite useful. And, if you do get a Wizard, Michio-dono, the day when you defeat a labyrinth will draw even closer.”

While I was sweating deep in thoughts, the Duke enlists the benefits of having Rutina.
He probably thinks that I am having trouble deciding if I should accept Rutina or not.
That’s right. At the moment, the focus is Rutina.
Should I have Rutina as my slave?

I would like to have Rutina, of course.
I do want to get her.
And make her my possession.
Not merely for the battle strength of my party, though.

I don’t know as to how much the battle strength of my party will increase if I get a Wizard.
There is already me, after all.
On the contrary, since he believes the battle strength of my party will increase if a Wizard joins us, it means the Duke doesn’t know I can use magic.
It is fortunate that the Duke hasn’t seen my using magic.

“Wouldn’t it be better for the Duke to keep her?”

I don’t understand as to why the Duke is being so expedient. It needs to be investigated.
First of all, even if he needs to go so far as to turn Rutina into a slave, there is no need for him to let go of her.

Even if he does, there is no need for him to give her to such a complete stranger as me.

“After overthrowing the Earl, would I keep his daughter who fell into slavery?”

He returns my question with his.
Enslaving the daughter of someone he ousted himself.
His reputation will get tarnished, certainly.
I can see where the Duke is coming from.

“It would indeed be bad.”
“It wouldn’t be that bad. Just that I and the members of my household are not allowed to. It applies to Cassia, too.”

Even Cassia isn’t allowed?
Since Cassia isn’t denying it when I look at her, it probably is true.

“Still, it doesn’t mean that it has to be me.”
“Being a noble daughter, she has a fiancé, of course; however, we cannot leave her in his care. If he enslaved someone who, until yesterday, was his fiancée, what sort of rumors would spread?”

It looks terrible in more than one ways.
Which would be better? Enslaving the daughter of someone you ousted or enslaving your ex-fiancée?
Well, it could work if they shared pure love.

“If she has a fiancé, doesn’t he has something to say?”
“The household of the Earl of Selmar will find a suitable candidate from within their family to be his fiancée. For them, it would be better than the daughter of a disinherited predecessor. Also, they have probably never met.”

They haven’t met yet?
Pure love story is out of question.
Such is the engagement of nobles, huh?
He won’t have any objection either, I guess.

“Is there no one else?”
“Since she has a fiancé, I cannot simply hand her to others. If they were inferior, her fiancé would lose face. The nobles and her own

family are out of question. Furthermore, since I cannot hand her to a noble, I cannot hand her to other influential or ordinary commoners within her territory either.”

From the viewpoint of Rutina’s fiancé, it would be disgraceful for him if she were to become a slave of an acquainted noble.
As for the Duke, he cannot own Rutina. Also, he understands how difficult it would be to hand her to someone else.
However, am I not a commoner, too?

“You are right. It may certainly not be a bad choice to entrust her to Michio-sama.”

Cassia interjects such words.
Is that even possible?
I have received Cassia’s approval.

“I guess. Ordinary commoners have their own share of disadvantages compared to nobles. However, there will be fewer problems for an Adventurer who doesn’t belong to an order of knights. The reason being, they can freely run away from the territory. If I am not wrong, Michio-dono is a freeman.”
“Yes.”
“A freeman has the direct appeal right granted by the Emperor. Although it is a nominal right, it is honored, nonetheless. Even if a noble tried to meddle with Michio-dono, over having her as a slave, you would be able to exercise the Emperor’s direct appeal right.”
“The Emperor’s direct appeal right?”

Does such a right exist?
However, it gives the vibes of Sakura Sogoro[W], so I’ll pass.
He was executed for directly appealing to the Shogun against the feudal domain’s tyranny.
Oh well. Since it is a right here, I won’t be executed for appealing, at least.

But how does the Duke know that I am a freeman?
Did he research to that extent?
I did show my Intelligence Card once to the Earl of Selmar’s subordinate knight. I wouldn’t be surprised if he checked it later.
Or, maybe Gozer concluded that when I had a duel in front of him?

“Even if such a case were brought up with the Emperor, they would rather decide in favor of the noble than an unknown freeman.”

I don’t know the Emperor nor does he know me.
The Duke, too, knows that very well.
Because it isn’t known to the public, is it a trap?

“In other words, it is possible for a noble to have something to say.”
“It is necessary as just a pretext warrant. Such a thing won’t happen for it is equivalent to picking a fight with the household of the Duke of Harz.”
“I see.”

That’s true.
Because it is the Duke’s decision, no one will object.
A power that could oppose the Duke of Harz would have no relation to this matter in the first place.

When the time comes, the Emperor’s direct appeal right will act as a deterrent.
Besides, if the matter is brought up, I will test as to how much of an acquaintance I am to that hentai Emperor.
This conversation has grown unnecessarily long.

“As for the condition of entrusting her to you, I would like Michio-dono to defeat a labyrinth. I would like you to become a noble as soon as possible. When someone newly becomes a noble, they cannot tell right from left. However, with a former noble’s daughter, you won’t have to face such a situation. If you like, you can force all the bothersome tasks on her.”

The Duke adds a strange condition.
The usual push for nobility, huh?
It is troublesome.
More than that, will it be fine to force her?

“To me, he is the enemy of my father. I cannot bring myself to join him.”

Rutina speaks.
Forcing her doesn’t seem possible.

No, maybe Rutina's mind has already been pushed to the brink?

"Still, it is better, Rutina. You will be able to live freely."
"Ane-sama[1]."
"It would be harsh there even for me. Still, it wouldn't be as harsh as fatal hostility from elves."

It doesn't look like the Duke has an ulterior motive in rejecting her.
And, it looks like I will be in his faction if I become a noble.

"I don't think it would be as such."
"Is Michio-dono aware of the Lords' Assembly?"

I have heard to some extent.
In an assembly, the more people you have in your faction, the better, right?
If every decision is based on majority vote, it will of course be better to have more people.
Whichever world you go to, you will always find some form of parliament.

"Politics is power, power is numbers, isn't it?"
"Ho, you do know, huh?"

Politics is power, power in numbers, numbers is money; is what I wanted to add.
In this world, however, I don't have to be bought with money like in Japan.
There is no need to use money for elections here.

"What if I don't move according to your expectations?"
"If a person whom I personally recommended to the Empire Liberation Society defeated a labyrinth and became a noble, he would belong to my faction in the eyes of other nobles."

Oh, really?
I try to threaten him a little but he threatens me back.
If you recommend someone to the Empire Liberation Society, you become their guardian, it seems.
If you find someone with potential and recommend them to the Empire Liberation Society, they receive support from the Empire

Liberation Society and defeat a labyrinth; consequently, you gain yourself an affirmative vote of a backbencher.

That he recommend me to the Empire Liberation Society, did he foresee this?
He is unexpectedly a politician.

First of all, even if I became a noble, the freedom of my actions would be considerably restricted.
Whatever I did, it would be taken as if I moved per the Duke's instruction.
If I did something idiotic, I would be considered a separate entity.

Second, it would be impossible for me and Rutina to revolt against the Duke.
If I did, I will be treated as a traitor by everyone.
If I tried to form an alliance in the assembly, they might not trust me due to betrayal.

Even if I went my own way, I would never be able to break away from the Duke no matter how many years passed.
Most of the nobles who belong to the Duke's faction likely carry the same risk.
That may be the extent of tolerable limit as a duke.

To begin with, I will probably need a lot of help from the Duke at first.
And, at the same time, I will be taught as to how things work in the Duke's faction.
I wonder if I will be able to manage it.

"In the first place, will I be able to defeat a labyrinth?"
"If a Wizard joins your party, it will not be a problem. Of course I am not telling you to do it right now."

The Duke hasn't seen my using magic, after all.
Also, since there is already someone in my party who can use magic, it wouldn't get as strong as Duke thinks it will even if a Wizard joined.
We must be able to reach the 50th floor, at least.
It is quite difficult.

Frankly speaking, I don't want to become a noble.
If I became a noble, it would only add to my troubles.
There is also the risk of their investigating my birthplace.
I don't want more troubles.

But I want Rutina.
I want to obtain this beautiful elf that resembles Cassia.
This dignified and elegant lady. I want her.
Honestly, Rutina can be my three bowls of rice.

Right now, this chance is hanging in front of me.
Should I sell my soul to the devil or not?
Actually, who says it is the devil?

Since I didn't want to become a noble anyway, there would be no reason for me to mind being a backbencher if I were to become one.
Besides, I have no issue with being considered part of the Duke's faction.
Also, I can push all the bothersome tasks to Rutina.
I have the approval of the faction's leader, after all.

"I, too, would like to ask of you. Please accept Rutina."

I have received Cassia's approval, too.
I have to accept her, no?
Have I ever declined any request from Cassia thus far?

If there were a problem, my information might reach the Duke and Cassia through Rutina.
However, since Rutina seems to have hostile intentions toward the Duke, it should be fine.
And, even if it weren't fine, I could remove her from the party and have her stay at home.
Her level is low anyway.

Rutina can partake only in household activities.
If it is inside the house, I can expect great performance of her.
I'd like to ask outstanding performance of her.

"O-Oh well."

It won't end unless I accept.

If my information leaked to Cassia and the Duke, there would always be the option to silence the Duke.
However, I couldn't possibly kill Cassia.
I would have to silence her with something else.

"Ooh, as expected of Michio-dono. Just as I expected."

I don't want you to expect anything of me.

"I can have a peace of mind now."

Or rather, isn't it complicated for Cassia to be thanking me for taking Rutina in as a slave?
It isn't envy.
However, is such a reaction appropriate?

"Let's see. I would like Michio-dono to be her owner for at least two years."
"Two years?"
"Two years; or rather, pay her tax for two years, at least."

Ah, I see.
So, it was like that, huh?
Of course that was it.
How could I misunderstand.

Although she has become a slave, it isn't like she has become a sex slave.
There is no excuse for me to do as I please with her.
Although I have her, it isn't like she is my possession.
She is only temporarily under my custody.

I will have to protect her since she is under my custody.
In order to remove her legitimate succession name, she has to be turned into a slave and released immediately.
That is why it was easy for Cassia.

Why two years? Because the tax in the very first year of slavery differs.
That she is a slave now, her tax will have to be paid.
Is it required as a formality?

“Wouldn’t it be better to release her immediately.”
“It could be seen as rigged if that were the case.”
“Would there be a problem if it were seen as such?”
“This is a message to all the nobles who have been neglecting their duties, particularly here. I cannot deny that there is an air of tension amongst the elven nobility. It was precisely this air that led the Earl of Selmar to leave the advancement of labyrinth subjugation alone.”

Punishing a crime to set an example for others, huh?

“And, because of that, I cannot release her unless I pay a 10,000 Nars tax.”
“As for releasing her, it is up to Michio-dono whether you want to or not. As far as I am concerned, I will ask of you the favor of releasing her.”
“There is no obligation to release her?”
“Of course. I hope you be strict with her. If she proves troubling, I wouldn’t care if you sold her to another party.“

It doesn’t look like she has to be released immediately.
I have no idea whether Rutina likes me or not.
And, it doesn’t look like I can ask her.
The fait accompli strategy will be effective, I guess.

Notes

1. Elder sister

Chapter 190 - Spark

The Duke lifts Rutina's hand and operates her Intelligence Card.
Rutina obeys acquiescently.
The hostage has been taken.

"Rutina……"

Cassia murmurs sadly.
It must be hard for her watching her cousin fall into slavery in front of her.

"Alright then, your social status has been changed to a slave. With this, your legitimate succession name should have come off. Later, accompany Michio-dono to a Slave Merchant he is acquainted with and have the name of your owner updated."
"Anyone I am acquainted with would do?"
"It doesn't concern me."

I am not the owner yet, it seems.
Because the purpose was merely to remove the legitimate succession name, is there no need for subsequent verification?
Or, is he not able to do that?

Knights possess a skill called Intelligence Card Operation; however, they cannot write wills or release slaves.
For the Duke's job, Holy Knight, is an advancement of Knight, he probably has the same restrictions.
Transferring ownership is perhaps limited to Slave Merchants.

"Well then, take care of me. I will refuse any order that benefits the Duke. Other than that, I will do my best."

Rutina comes and greets me.
The greeting seems diligent.
For the time being, at least.
She shows me her Intelligence Card.

Rutina | ♀ | 15 years old | Villager | First Year Slave

Owner

Her legitimate succession name is no longer there.
And, she seems to have lost her family name, too.
Will I lose Kaga if I become a slave?
The owner field is empty.

“I will be relying on you.”
“If you have the capability, I will keep in mind that I am a slave.”

If I have the capability?
I wonder what she has in mind.

“Your Highness.”

The moment Rutina finishes her greetings, Gozer barges in.
That energy, though. Has the Earl of Selmar been caught?

“You found him?”
“Yes.”
“Michio-dono, let’s call it a day here. Today’s operation was successful thanks to you, Michio-dono. I would like you to take her with you. Although she doesn’t have anything with her, she should be alright. I don’t mind if you take her home together with your party members. Cassia, too, go back to Bode.”

Cassia protests to the Duke, shaking her head slowly yet largely.
He doesn’t want her to witness the execution of the Earl.
Is it the same for Rutina?

“This is my duty.”
“I-I understand.”

Cassia seems to have accepted not to witness the execution.
It won’t be a good sight to see.

“Michio-dono, please visit the Bode Castle again tomorrow morning. By yourself, Michio-dono. It is already late tonight and I don’t know as to how much time it will take. Later in the morning would do.”
“I understand.”
“Alright then, Gozer.”

The Duke takes Gozer with him and leaves the room quickly.
He probably thinks Cassia or Rutina could cause trouble if he took his time.

“Well then, shall we return?”

I invite Cassia.

“Right.”

Cassia nods, her face full of grief.
A beautiful woman sunk in sorrow can look good.
As for Rutina, she keeps staring at the Duke’s back until he leaves; however, she doesn’t show any sign of sadness.
A beautiful woman drowned in anger can look good, too.

“My Lady.”
“I am alright. Let’s go back to Bode.”

A woman, who may either be a maid or a guard, addresses her again; upon which, Cassia replies firmly.
I chant Party Formation incantation and invite Rutina to my party.
She joins the party without expressing any resistance.
Following after Cassia’s party, I return to Bode with Rutina.

“Master!”

The moment I appear inside the Bode Castle, Roxanne rushes immediately to me.
Because I went to the battlefield, she was worried.
I didn’t do anything, though.
I am still not sure whether there was a battle or not.

“Nothing happened here, right?”
“Yes.”
“I see. For free Adventurers, it is common to have slaves, eh?”

Rutina derives an interpretation on her own and agrees with it by herself.
It may be understandable for her to know that Roxanne is a slave because she called me Master but how does she know that the three behind Roxanne are her partners?

“Master, she is?”
“I will explain once we return home. It is time to call it a day.”

Since Cassia is here, I will have to put the explanation off.
I calm Roxanne down who is staring suspiciously.

“Rutina, don’t get discouraged because of today. Live strongly.”
“Of course.”
“Do your best patiently. Eventually, you will be able to make a comeback.”
“Make a comeback? Do you really believe that?”

Rutina cross-questions Cassia.
It really is useless, after all, huh?
Rutina seems to be aware of that.

“It is fine. I plan on availing every chance I get. You don’t have to worry.”
“Michio-sama, please take care of Rutina.”

Cassia gives up and bows to me.

“Yes. Rutina, we need to move. Are you ready?”
“Plenty.”
“Alright then, Rutina. Farewell.”
“Likewise, Ane-sama. I hope you live a long life.”

Rutina behaves obstinately.
Well, she cannot show weakness to the people who killed her parent, the Earl, right away, can she?
She requires time.
Time should heal her.

We return home.
While chanting [Field Walk] incantation, I cast [Warp].
Although I end up showing [Warp] to Rutina, it cannot be helped.
Since the house walls have shield cement applied, I cannot go in without [Warp].

I can use [Field Walk] to go to Quratar Adventurer’s Guild but it will be troublesome to walk from there.
[Warp] and [Field Walk] look similar, so she will probably not notice.

Is my daily life going to be risky from now on?
It is already quite risky.

“Miria, can you please get a kandelaar[W][1]?”

The living room is pitch dark, so I have to rely on Miria.
Since it is late, I won’t be able to explain anything.
Although I said late, it would be early evening in Japan.
The lifestyle of this world is quite healthy.

“Yes, desu.”

Although I cannot see, I can tell she has brought it since I can hear *gasogaso* rustling sound.
I am getting used to the dark, though.
Still, getting used to it isn’t enough to enjoy it without lighting it up.

“Pass it to Vesta. She can light it.”
“Yes, desu.”
“Wait, be careful.”
“I think it will be alright.”

I hear Vesta’s voice.
I sorta know Vesta’s location.
She gives off a feeling of intimidation for she is large.
I am not sure about the location of the other members, though.

Nevertheless, being party members, I know their general location.
Wouldn’t it be bad if Vesta blew fire in this situation?
Shouldn’t she blow in the direction of the wall where there is no one?
Will it really be alright?

I would have used [Fire Wall] had Rutina not been here.
It isn’t like the risk would be less if I used [Fire Wall].
If I did, I would be the only one safe since I can specify the location.
That’s all.
Such a cruel way of thinking.

Before long, the corner of the room brightens up.
It is farther than I thought it would be.
A flame extends from top to bottom.
Putting the kandelaar down, Vesta blows the fire downward.

I see.
Like this, there is no risk of blowing the fire on others or the wall.
It is absolutely fine.

“Then, everyone, sit down.”

Now that it has become bright, everyone takes a seat around the table.
Where should I start from?

“Excuse me.”

Rutina sits down as well.
Because five of the six seats are already allotted, only one seat is left.
The one next to my left.

“She is Rutina. A lot has happened and she has now been entrusted to me.”
“You should say it clearly that you have been bestowed a prisoner of war.”

Rutina unexpectedly interrupts.
Will it really be fine?

“Prisoner of war?”
“No matter how modestly you put it, I am just a war trophy.”
“War trophy!”

That’s a cruel way of putting it.

“I am Rutina who lost miserably in tonight’s battle. It has been decided that I will be Michio-sama’s war trophy. Everyone, you can consider me your junior. Please treat me well.”

Rutina greets everyone just like that.
I feel like my reputation has been damaged after she said she is a war trophy.
Even though she stated a fact.

“Is she a slave, too?”
“That’s right.”

I answer Roxanne's question.
She is not a sex slave, though.

"You don't need to worry as I don't plan on becoming the number one slave."

Rutina brings up a strange topic.
What does she mean by not intending to compete with Roxanne?
Or, does she mean she isn't satisfied merely with being the number one slave?
Roxanne looks at Rutina with a subtle expression.

In the first place, does Rutina know who the number one slave is?
Because Roxanne spoke first, does it make Roxanne the number one slave?

"Well, I don't plan on making any changes."

I will have to support Roxanne here.
It would cause a huge trouble if Roxanne and Rutina got on bad terms.

"In the future, I want to play an active role in the Lords' Assembly. It is my dream. I thought I completely lost it because of that man; however, it still seems possible. I want to rather go for that than becoming the number one slave."

How can you choose another route simply like that?
At least, she didn't suggest that the number one slave is a crappy job.
By 'that man', she probably means the Duke.

"The Lords' Assembly?"
"It is an assembly where the nobles gather to enact laws."

Explains Sherry; upon Roxanne, muttering that.

"A lot happened and it was decided that I will become a noble by defeating a labyrinth and leave that work to Rutina."
"……There is no doubt Master will be able to defeat a labyrinth one day."

Roxanne's face somehow has a dark expression about it.
Nah, it must be due to the dim lighting from the kandelaar.
Which reminds, I feel like I told Roxanne that I don't plan on becoming a noble.

I didn't change my opinion for Roxanne; however, wouldn't it seem as if I changed it for Rutina?
Quite so.
I said I don't intend to become a noble.
However, it was a lie.

"Do you have any problem with entering the labyrinth?"

Trying to close the topic, I ask Rutina.

"Earlier, my father told me I don't have to, so I formed a party when I was young. Everyone except me went to the labyrinth; however, it didn't help much. I believe I can change my job to Wizard if I gain more experience. Until then, I will have to trouble you. Once I am a Wizard, I can be of some help, I think."

What do you mean it didn't help much? Didn't it help you a little?
It brought you to Villager Lv2. Probably.
The Hero job, for which you must defeat a thief on your first battle, is impossible for her.

"We will form a party first but I cannot let you enter the labyrinth until you become a Wizard."

It would be unpleasant if my secrets came out after going to the labyrinth.
I will have to keep watch on her until I am confident that I can trust her.
I come up with an excuse to not take her to the labyrinth.

"You don't have to worry. I won't stab you or run away."

Although it was merely an excuse, Rutina says something strange.
Roxanne is staring at Rutina with a complicated expression about her face.
Since she mentioned killing and running away, it must be on her mind.

I need to consider all that.

“If not me, do you plan on stabbing the Duke?”
“If I ever get a chance, even I don’t know what will become of that man.”

I should better not let her come close to the Duke. It will be dangerous.
I would be happy if the Duke’s meddling lessened.
However, since it is her dream to be active in the Lords’ Assembly, I seem to have been given the role of her supervisor.

“It will seriously be difficult for me to live if I escape.”

It will be tough because a slave would turn into a Thief if they ran away.
Especially, since she was an earl’s daughter until tonight.
I don’t have to worry about her running away.

“It is just that. In the first place, even if I stayed with the Earl of Selmar’s household without being an earl, I will be treated as a potential seed of fire. Besides, I am not so conceited as to believe that the revival is possible single-handedly. That said, I think the current situation is much better. I can upset the plot that man has written. I can only be grateful to Michio-sama.”

Roxanne’s expression softens up a little after Rutina expresses her gratitude to me, huh?

“Is she one of the Earl’s staff?”
“That’s right.”
“Really?”

I answer Sherry’s question without adding anything else.
Sherry also knows about the Duke’s plan to overthrow the Earl.
I believe it wouldn’t be appropriate if we delved deeper into the matter in front of a related party.
Considering the operation succeeded, she could really be considered a war trophy.

“Since she hates the Duke, it is unlikely for her to expose the secrets, isn’t it?”

“I wonder what you are talking about.”
“Err, it is just that I don’t want to expose the party strategy and skills to a third party.”

I have been asked directly.
There is no need to fear about the information leaking to the Duke when she hates him that much, right?
She wouldn’t say she will expose it even if she intended to expose it; however, it is somewhat reassuring.

“I won’t consider actions which may benefit that man. However, the information may be helpful in the future at the Lords’ Assembly.”

I don’t know whether I should feel relieved or not.
She may use the information as a bargaining chip.
Roxanne’s expression seems to be becoming fiercer.

“Still, I was a member of the execution team, too.”
“There is no point in holding a grudge against a commoner warrior who was made to participate.”

Is she treating me as a commoner warrior?
That’s true, though.
Rutina seems to be the type that says clearly what she has on her mind.

Roxane, too, is glaring clearly at Rutina with an intense look.
Isn’t that a spark flying between Roxanne and Rutina?

Notes

1. A Dutch word. Candelabrum in English

Chapter 191 - Doze

"It is already too late tonight. Let's take it slowly tomorrow."

Because the mood has been getting terrible, I decide to wrap the talk up.
It will be better to do it later.

"I understand, Master."

Roxanne responds with a smile.
Immediately after, her expression turns back into the grim one.
She isn't angry at me, though.
I am worried about the relationship between Roxanne and Rutina.

"Even though it is time to sleep, we only have one bed. All of us sleep together. Will Rutina be sleeping in the bed with us?"
"It is alright. As I am a slave, I am resolved to sleep on the floor."

I invite her casually but she declines.
She has the same dodging ability as Roxanne's.
In actuality, we have two beds conjoined side by side.
So, it won't be much of a problem.

Actually, if I separated them, each bed could accommodate three, no?
Nah, I don't need to go that far.
It is possible for her to give up sleeping on the floor.
It is a cruel method, though.

"Since I have an extra blanket, I will give it to you."

Roxanne seems to have approved of my idea.

"I guess. Miria, can you bring the extra blanket?"

No answer.

"Miria?"

Roxanne calls out to her.

She seems to have dozed off.

“Has she fallen asleep?”
“Miria, go and bring the extra blanket, please.”
“xxxxxxxxxx”

After Roxanne wakes her up, Miria leaves the room while muttering something.
The words she uttered half-awoken didn’t sound like Brahim.

“Such behaviour in front of Master.”
“It is such a time, so there is no helping it.”

I calm Roxanne down.
Provoking her more than she already is would be a bad idea.

It is unavoidable to fall asleep for it is so late.
It has made even Sherry sleepy.
Vesta, too, is on the verge of drifting off to the dreamland.
It may also be due to her body temperature going down, though.

Miria returns with a blanket.
Because there is lighting from the kandelaar this time around, I can see her clearly.

“Sorry for the trouble, guys. Well, let’s go and sleep then?”
“Yes, desu.”
“Here, have this.”

I receive the blanket from Miria and pass it to Rutina.
I can order her to sleep in the bed, too; however, since she herself wants to sleep on the floor, I will let her.

“I don’t think it is a good idea to give her special treatment.”
“Although you said special treatment, in actuality, she is sleeping on the floor. It is fine for the time being.”
“Is that so?”

Going to the room on second floor while holding the kandelaar, Roxanne voices her opinion; to which, I tell her I don’t see any problem.
Even though I said that, will it be alright to leave it as is for now?

Besides, if I bought her a bed, I would be giving her special treatment.
It cannot be helped.

“Leaving that aside, do you think we can trust Rutina?”
“Trust her?”
“If I take her to the labyrinth, she may learn about various things. That’s why I cannot have her go to the labyrinth right away.”
“I see. So, is that why you acted different from usual?”

I explain the reason as to why I cannot take Rutina to the labyrinth immediately.
Roxanne didn’t notice, it seems
I am glad the misunderstanding has been clarified.

“How much can we trust her? I cannot tell based on just today. However, she seems to be holding a grudge, so it is unlikely for her to be a spy.”

Sherry gives her composed evaluation.
I am unsure as to how much she has grasped the situation; nevertheless, she seems to have gotten relatively close.
So, there really was a possibility of her being an assassin sent by the Duke, huh?

“A spy?”
“A person who is sent in to investigate the internal conditions.”
“I won’t allow such a thing.”

Roxanne seemed to not know the word spy.
Sherry puts her heart into explaining.
Spies and rebels seem to be subversionary existences who are unrelated to the commoners in this world.

Or so I thought; however, Sherry knows about the spies well.
Should I say ‘as expected’?

“We will observe her carefully for the time being. Let’s sleep for now; I am really sleepy.”

Since it has gotten too late, I put a rest to it without thinking deeply over it.

Everyone slips into the bed.
Even though it is supposed to be a goodnight kiss, we do it under the light.
I don't get to enjoy it for long, though.

Everyone is sleepy.
My eyelids feel heavy, too.
Miria drifts off to sleep while I take my time kissing Vesta.
I should make some noise, or sing maybe, so no one falls asleep.

Vesta always kisses passionately and swirls her tongue.
I leave Miria at what could be called a mere greeting.
I am feeling a little lonely.
Sherry, too, finishes shortly.

I go somewhat crazy while kissing Roxanne.
As expected of Roxanne.
She is the finale, after all.
After parting our lips, I put the kandelaar light out and kiss Roxanne again in the dark.

I regain my consciousness as I feel Vesta stirring close by.
Amidst a vague euphoria, I wake up.
But I feel like sleeping again.
I know it is early in the morning; however, I continue to sleep as is.

It has been a long time since I last went back to sleep after waking up.
This may be the first time ever since I came to this world.
As it is, I may not even be able to enter the labyrinth.
It gets dark early, too.

Roxanne kisses me as soon as I wake up.
I see.
So, this is the reason as to why I wake up early and don't go back to sleep, huh?

Did Roxanne go back to sleep, too, when I dozed off in the morning?
Or, did she wake up, lie next to and keep watching me?
In either case, I am grateful.

“Good morning, Master.”
“Good morning, Roxanne.”

I greet Roxanne normally.
Everyone seems to be up.
Earlier, I woke up to Vesta’s movement in the first place.

I claim the last night’s share as I kiss the three girls for a long time.
Vesta appears to be normal.
I receive Vesta’s assertive tongue service.
After kissing plenty, I change into my clothes

“The sun of the new day is already up.”

When Roxanne opens the window, the sunlight shines inside the room.
Have I been asleep for so long?

“We can’t help it today. Let’s have breakfast first.”
“Okay.”

Everyone moves to the first floor.
Rutina was standing in the living room when we go downstairs.
She seems to have had already woken up.

“Good morning.”
“Morning, Rutina. We are going to make breakfast now. Do you want to make something, Rutina?”
“No, I have never cooked before.”

Rutina proudly sticks her chest out.
Seems to be voluminous it its own right.
Doesn’t it?
Since she was an earl’s daughter, is that why she hasn’t cooked before?

“Oh well. I guess you will learn after helping out for some time.”
“But I would like to devote myself eventually to the Lords’ Assembly.”
“In this house, everyone cooks together, everyone eats together.”

Roxane cuts in.
She doesn’t need to devote herself fully to the Lords’ Assembly.

She should have enough time to cook, too.

“Helping out would do until you are able to cook by yourself.”
“I understand.”

It seems to have settled for the time being.

“I will now be going out to buy bread and other ingredients for breakfast. Later, I will buy you shoes. Also, I will give you one piece of equipment. What about weapon? Is there a weapon you prefer to carry?”

Rutina isn’t barefoot; however, she is wearing gauzy shoes seemingly made of fabric.
They are probably slippers used for walking inside the Earl of Selmar’s castle.
She needs different shoes if she is to go out.

As for the weapon, when she becomes a Wizard, she will use either a spear or a stick; however, a stick would be difficult for a Villager.
Before that, wouldn’t there be rumors of a majestic Wizard carrying a stick.
Because I am not sure myself, I leave it to her to decide.

“Is it really okay for me to carry a weapon?”
“It is okay as long as you don’t have strange ideas.”
“Then, although I am not sure if I can use it well, I would like a one-handed sword, please.”
“One-handed sword?”

I go and get the equipment from the store room.

“I will practice a little for when I get to have an audience with that man.”

I could hear Rutina muttering as I was exiting the living room but I pretend not to have heard it.
I bring out Hard Leather Shoes from the store room.
As for the sword, Scimitar would do since she won’t be using it inside the labyrinth.

When I return to the living room, everyone was silent.

The mood seems a little edgy.
Is it really impossible for the girls to get along with each other?

“Here, take this.”
“Okay.”
“Put the shoes on, so you can come with us. We are going to the Adventurer’s Guild.”
“I understand.”

I have her change shoes and head to downtown.
While shopping, Rutina keeps looking around restlessly.
She probably didn’t go outside the castle much.
Or, has she never visited Quratar before?

“Is it your first time visiting Quratar?”
“Yes, it is the first time I came here.”
“You can go and have a look around whenever you have time. However, since there is a labyrinth here, a monster may appear.”
“I will be careful.”

Even though I said a monster may appear, I have yet to see one.
With so many people around, it being the centre of Quratar, the monster can be tidied up immediately after it appears.
Besides, I move via [Warp] between home and the Adventurer’s Guild.

Even if one appeared it would probably be a Kobold Lv1.
Quratar’s residents wouldn’t have any problem.
However, it could be difficult for a Villager Lv2 Rutina.

“Since there isn’t much for you to help with, it being breakfast, you can simply observe for now.”

After returning home, we prepare breakfast.
I make a ham egg style dish.
Cooking such a simple dish for the breakfast is easy and quick.

“Did Michio-sama make this?”
“Master’s cooking is delicious and wonderful.”

Roxanne replies before I could.

“Do freemen cook their own food?”
“Well, we don’t have people to do it.”
“Is there a reason for not getting a slave responsible only for cooking?”

What might she be suggesting?

“There is none.”
“I have heard that you cannot make a delicious soup unless it is boiled well for several days.”
“There are a few techniques to make it quick.”

The dishes that nobles eat are as such, after all.
A chef works there full time and serves meals all day.
I don’t want to bring the common sense of nobility here.

Once the breakfast was ready, we take it to the table in order to eat together.
I distribute the soup, which Miria and Sherry made. Although I put the bowl in front of Rutina last, she doesn’t complain.
I start eating after finishing up with the soup.

“I am grateful for the toil and tribute of everyone. I receive this with love.”

Rutina is the only one to mutter something.
Is this a prayer before eating?
I should have expected something like this from nobles.
However, her prayer didn’t have a gentle ring to it.

Rutina tries the ham egg style dish.

“How is it?”
“Yes, it is delicious.”

I ask for her opinion. It doesn’t seem bad nor does it seem so-so.
It seems as if she ate something good.

Furthermore, the way Rutina is eating looks beautiful.
Elegant, versatile and fluent.
There is nothing uncouth, at all, about the way she holds the knife.

I wonder if she has refined manners because she was an earl's daughter.
What about the Duke and Cassia?
I couldn't observed them closely.
Actually, I couldn't observe Cassia closely.

As for the Duke, I am not interested in the way he eats.
As far as Rutina is concerned, there shouldn't be any problem even if I observe her closely.
And, It isn't like I have any ulterior motive.
I watch her carefully from the seat next to her.

The sight of Rutina eating is so elegant.
I don't think the way Roxanne and the girls eat is crude; however, there is a visible difference.
Smart, beautiful and graceful.
To the point that I want to eat her.

"After the breakfast, I will be going to Bode."

I will be visiting the Duke's place; however I said Bode because I am not sure as to how sensitive the subject would be.

"Okay."
"I will leave the rest to Roxanne."
"Please leave the rest to me."

After I was done eating, I head to the Duke's place.
It won't be a problem to entrust cleaning and such to Roxanne.

The Bode Castle is peaceful today compared to yesterday.
You cannot tell that something happened at all.

"Is the Duke inside?"
"Yes, he is in the office."

I enter inside as if nothing really happened.
Does the member of the order of knights at reception not know about the incident?
Ah, the person who was mobilized last night would most likely not be working in the morning.

When I knock on the door and enter the office, the Duke was buried within the papers.
Gozer isn't here.

"Oh, Michio-dono. Sorry, I ended up staying up all night."

The Duke greets me with a dispirited expression.
He is clearly lacking sleep.

"You look tired."
"I must send these documents to the concerned people as fast as possible. This is the only work I cannot delegate to my subordinates."
"No wonder."
"I would have asked you to come early had I known it would be like this."

The Duke comes over with unsteady steps and sprawls himself on the sofa.
Didn't he know he would need to complete paperwork beforehand?
Or, did something happen?

"Where is Gozer-dono?"
"Gozer was helping me out until a while ago. Was it until an hour ago? Not sure. Maybe it was until two hours ago?"

His memory seems to have already become shabby.

"If you are busy, then-"
"No, I am alright. How is she?"
"She isn't entirely upset."
"In actuality, she is an obedient and kind girl. She is just being adamant right now but she will calm down with time."

Will she really calm down over time?
Also, is she really 'just being adamant'?
I wonder.
Isn't it natural for her relatives to see her in good light?

The more I think about it, the less I get it.
Meanwhile, the Duke turns silent.
When I look at him dubiously, he had his eyes closed and neck bent

back.

Is he asleep?
Is it fine for him to be defenseless in front of someone else?
It would have been dangerous had I brought Rutina with me.

“Duke.”
“I am alright. As for her…”

He doesn’t seem to want to admit he dozed off.
Thereafter, I talk to the Duke without break.
The discussion ends properly.

The Duke seemed absent-minded till the very end. I wasn’t able to clearly understand what he wanted to say.
The purpose I was called here for was to talk about Rutina.
I thought he would ask me to make promises but he didn’t.
I don’t think he would remember what he said even if he did.

Can’t I use his hand to sign contracts?
For example, a contract to make Rutina a sex slave?
I didn’t do that, though, but warned him that Rutina bears a grudge against us and it would be dangerous if she were allowed to approach.
Whether sleep learning is effective or not, it remains to be found out.

After reporting to the order of knights that I visited diligently, I return home.
Because I asked them to send my regards to their leader, it will reach Gozer.

“I am home. Wha-”

When I arrive at home, Rutina was crouching on the floor, her head lowered.
Did something happen?

Dogeza?
Nope, since she is receiving me, it must be mitsuyubi[W].
Also, Roxanne seems to be standing in the back, satisfied.

“I was wrong.”

Rutina takes the initiative and apologizes.
Did something happen here?
To be more specific, did she do something?
What exactly did you do, Roxanne?

Chapter 192 - Lucky Charm

When I returned home, Rutina was doing a dogeza.
I didn't see her as a woman that would ever do that.
Roxanne must have done something.
I wonder what she did.

"W-What is this?"
"Well, after we had an honest talk, Rutina finally came to an understanding."

Roxanne is smiling.
It looks like they had a T-A-L-K.
Did you talk properly? Or did you drive her against the wall?

"My eyes have opened thanks to Roxanne-ane-sama."

It doesn't look like there is a heavy feeling of emotions coming from Rutina's words.

"That is really good."

Unless you are hiding your displeasure.
What did you really do, Roxanne!

"Because she explained the reasons logically, it looks like Rutina came to an understanding."

Sherry explains on behalf of Roxanne.
Looks like Sherry is taking Roxanne's side this time.
Since it's Sherry, I guess things really did happen in a logical manner, instead of forcing the logic on her with torture.
It would be harsh if I didn't forgive her.

"D-Do your best, desu."
"It will be alright, I think. Most likely."

Miria and Vesta seem a little intimidated.

"W-Well, stand up."

“Yes, I will reform myself from now on and devote my mind and heart completely to Michio-sama. Please treat me very well.”

I asked Rutina to stand up.
I feel like her eyes are dead.
I would be troubled if she became a broken doll.

“Take care of me as well. Are you alright?”
“I am alright.”

Was she shaken because of Roxanne’s shadow just now?
She doesn’t look fine.
She might be suffering from trauma.
What did you really do?

“Ah! Rutina, we’ll stay home today.”
“I think it will be alright to take her to the labyrinth.”

Roxanne makes a suggestion.

“Are you sure?”
“Yes.”
“Rutina understands how terrifying it will be if she leaks information.”

Sherry said a terrifying thing so casually.
What did you teach her?

“B-Be careful, desu.”
“I think you need to pay attention.”

I have a feeling that Miria and Vesta are frightened.

“There is absolutely no way I will leak secret information.”

Rutina’s statement is full of conviction.
Rutina gives off a diligent feeling.
Or is it a feeling full of fear?

“It is alright. A slave who can cause harm to Master doesn’t exist.”

I look at Roxanne, but she only nods and smiles.
In the first place, Rutina hated the duke, but didn’t ask me to do anything, right?

“If Roxanne says so.”
“Yes. Aren’t you glad, Rutina.”
“Thank you very much.”

Rutina bows her head.
The sensation from her talk is amazing.

“Well, do your best.”
“If I become a Wizard by participating in the labyrinth… n-no. I will do my best for Michio-sama’s sake.”

Rutina corrected her remark after a slight look from Roxanne.
I am pretty sure Roxanne got the Wild Animal Tamer job.
Nope, she didn’t.
It will be alright to take her to the labyrinth like this, right?

“Then, I’ll be counting on you.”
“Okay.”
“It is not ‘okay’.”
“C-Certainly, Michio-sama.”

Rutina corrected her words again when Roxanne spoke to her.
However, this level of subordination isn’t really necessary.
Even Roxanne and the others reply with ‘okay’ or ‘yes’.

“I wouldn’t have said anything if she had the mental readiness from the start, but in this case, I need to shape her first.”

Roxanne explains the reason.
I-I see.
It is quite hard to object.
Well, I guess it’s fine?

“If we are going to the labyrinth, then what about protective gear?”
“You can choose from the store room. Follow me, Rutina.”
“Please take care of me, Roxanne-ane-sama.”

Rutina suddenly sticks closely to Roxanne and leaves the room with her.
She has been fully trained.
Eventually, I might probably be hearing things like ‘Miria-san’.

“What happened?”
“Nothing in particular. She was taught to understand the right and wrong of things.”

I asked Sherry an abstract question when Roxanne left and she gave me an abstract answer.
When I looked at Miria, she averted her eyes.
Seems like Roxanne and Sherry did nasty torture, after all.

Aside from Roxanne, did even Sherry approve of that?
It was surely dangerous to leave her in her previous condition.
I think Sherry felt uneasy as well.
I assume everything turned out alright.

Rutina returned with Roxanne after a while as I waited.
Rutina strengthened herself with protective gear.

“Next is Sacrificial Misanga. I will tie it on your left ankle.”

As for Sacrificial Misanga, it is inside my Item Box, not the store room.
But I am losing space in the Item Box because of that.
Since it is expensive, I can’t help it in this case.

“Um, Sacrificial Misanga?”
“That’s right.”
“Umm…”

Rutina looks at Roxanne, seeking help.

“It is alright. Master thinks very deeply about his companions. That’s why I said he is a great person.”

She wasn’t seeking help but approval?
With Roxanne’s approval, Rutina nervously lifted the hem of her dress up.
She has been wearing the same dress since she came last night from the Earl of Selmar’s castle.

Or rather than a dress, it has a feeling of luxury nightgown.
It was a good timing.
When Rutina lifts her dress, I see her white ankle under the hem of

the long skirt.
Oh.

White.
Pure white, slender, and smooth legs.
Tender and smooth milky coloured skin.
I can't tolerate this.

Beautiful.
Beautiful and bewitching.
I feel that something might be different.

I don't think it is simply a matter of being raised elegantly because she was born a noble.
In her exists an absolute beauty that separates her from the others.
A pure white that is not soiled by anything.

I've only seen the ankle and I'm going this far. What will happen if I see the upper areas?
Unfortunately, the long skirt hem is clinging tightly to her, firmly hiding the rest.
I want to tear it and check her out.
I want to make her mine.

I must make her mine.
I must make her mine immediately.
I must make her mine at all costs.
Because it wasn't decided that she would be mine, it makes me think about it even more.

I will make her mine. I will make her mine. I will make her mine.
If I manage to own Rutina, I will be happy. I will be happy. I will be happy.
As a practice for that time, I wrap the Misanga around her pure white skin.

"I have to buy you clothes as well. It will be clothes that commoners wear, though."

Rutina's dress doesn't really have any strange appearance.
But she may not be able to move easily inside the labyrinth.

Well, it's not like she's the vanguard.

Oh, right. That reminds me, is it necessary to make her defeat a monster bare-handed?
I will let her do that tomorrow.
She will learn by observation today.

"No, I- Um…"
"It is alright if you receive it with appreciation."
"O-Okay."

Rutina's elegant legs shiver for a moment.
It seems Roxanne has persuaded her.
I tie the Misanga silently.

It will be difficult to help Rutina.
Things exist in society that we are not allowed to touch.
Even so, I want to feel Rutina's legs.

I gently touch her soft and gentle skin.
How good it will be to hug this skin tightly in the bed.
I want to hug her.
I want to hug her until she is broken.

"Is the Misanga fine?"
"Thank you very much. Also, umm…"

"This."

Rutina hesitates and then takes something out from her dress.
It has something that resembles a pocket.

"A gold coin?"

What she took out was a gold coin.
It is not special, just an ordinary gold coin.
I looked at it, but there was no mark.
That's normal.

"It was sewed on to this dress."

Was she afraid of it getting discovered because I suggested changing her clothes?

And she took it out herself before that happened.
If she kept quiet and got discovered later, what type of scolding would she receive from Roxanne and Sherry?
Scary.

“Hmm. Is that so?”
“I always keep one with me because my deceased mother told me that you never know what sort of things may happen.”

It is an excellent teaching.
And looks really helpful.
A single gold coin may not help in the long run, though.
On the other hand, it’s not possible to carry several pieces.

“It might be possible to buy yourself back if you had a white gold coin.”
“Ehh…”
“You don’t have one?”

Should I do a physical checkup here?

“I am not carrying any. And I have never seen a white gold coin as you can expect.”
“I see. Well, even I carry only one of them.”
“Eh?”
“You want to see it?”

Because her answer was doubtful, I decided to show it to her.
Didn’t Roxanne teach you not to doubt your master?
I take the white gold coin from my Item Box, and pass it to Rutina.

I am using one line in my Item Box even though I have only one white gold coin.
This is also a reason why my Item Box is crowded.
But I can’t help it since it has double the value of 50 gold coins.

“Is this a white gold coin?”
“Is it fine that you’ve brought a gold coin along?”
“Because that man said it will be alright, there is no problem.”

Surely, the Duke said I can take her back.
But he couldn’t have done a physical checkup at that time.

A white gold coin aside, the Earl's house finance wouldn't go down because of one gold coin.

"In case someone is sold as a slave because they are troubled with money, they sometimes sew money to their underwear. It will become the slave's possession this way."

There also seem to be such cases according to Sherry.
And Rutina didn't get the Thief job either.
It is being considered as her money, not the house money.

"That settles it. You can take care of it."

"Ah, is it dangerous holding a gold coin while naked? I will keep it for you inside my Item Box then."
"Uhh… you will not take it?"

Rutina asks anxiously as I was returning the gold coin.

"Did you expect I would do that?"
"I don't know anything about this case. Usually, a slave is not recognized as the owner of their clothes. The underwear is recognized as the slave's belonging, though. So, the slave's master prepares something appropriate and the clothes are sold with the slave. Even in the case from before, the money became the slave's belonging because it was kept in the underwear."

Sherry explains to me calmly.

"Is it considered my stuff even if I don't take it?"
"I think the chance of that is big."

The teaching of Rutina's mother seems to be slightly insufficient.
Actually, since her mother told her to stick it on her body, it is Rutina who is wrong for not putting it in her underwear.

"I wouldn't know if you kept silent."
"But just now, you told me you will take off my clothes."

I didn't say I will take them off.

"You can't always stay in the same clothes; you will have to change daily."

“Y-You are right.”
“You could have done it again and put it in your underwear secretly.”
“But…”

Ah, that’s right.
I don’t know what Roxanne would do if she got discovered later.

“It would be like my trust in Master isn’t enough.”

She will receive a scolding even without getting discovered.

“Because I am not sure who this belongs to, it is fine for this gold coin to belong to Rutina.”

I declare.
This gold coin belonged to Rutina from the very beginning, so I declared it is fine for Rutina to own it even if it belongs to me now.
Will Rutina get the Thief job if she hides it inside her underwear?

In the first place, if they took something that belongs to a slave, wouldn’t the owner get the Thief job?
I already have the Thief job, though.
I wonder if there are people who own slaves that have the Thief job or something similar.

Aren’t there two?
Right, there is Thief and Bandit.

“Is it really alright?”

Even though I put it in a way even an idiot can understand, Rutina asks reservedly.

“It is alright.”
“Okay, thank you very much.”
“Do you want to hold onto the gold coin?”
“Yes, because it is a lucky charm that my mother gave me.”

She didn’t really teach her about keeping a gold coin on her body, but actually gave her one?
This gold coin doesn’t look like it was the property of the Earl of Selmar’s house. It really belonged to Rutina.

I would surely have gotten the Thief job had I taken that.
Because she originally owned it.

Chapter 193 - Memory

"Alright. Then let's go to the Labyrinth."

After Rutina's equipment got readied, we [Warp] to the labyrinth.
I warped directly to Quratar's 22nd Floor.
I consider Rutina but don't go in from the entrance.
An admission fee would be taken at the entrance.

"Umm, where are we?"

When I warped to the labyrinth, Roxanne was confused and not Rutina.
I wonder if she figured it was not the usual floor because of the smell.
Rutina, doesn't seems to be confused.
Was she disciplined to this extent?

"It is the 22nd Floor. Area attack magic will not be cast here."
"I see, you're right."
"I would like a small number first please."
"I understand."

How will it feel for Rutina who was the Earl's daughter until yesterday to suddenly fight.
Is it slightly cruel?
Although being Villager Lv2 doesn't mean she will die immediately, what hurts will hurt.
There is the possibility her heart may get broken if she receives attacks many times.

First will be a field trip.
It would be good for the field trip to be on as high a floor as possible.
Still magic will be flying even if she is observing from behind.

The 23rd Floor will be difficult since the monsters there use area attack magic.
Area attack magic can't be avoided.

In another word, the 22nd floor is the most suitable floor for the field trip.

“Rutina, have you been to a labyrinth before?”

I ask Rutina directly.
Since Rutina has the explorer job as well as villager, she should have entered labyrinth.
The only jobs she has are Villager and Explorer.
Because Explorer is Lv1, she most likely only entered and did not fight.

“I have not.”
“Eh? Never?”

I asked again with a loud voice unintentionally.

“Please forgive me.”
“Ah, don’t worry. It is not a particularly bad thing to have never entered.”
“I am grateful that you would say so.”

Rutina apologized peacefully.
There is no need to be scared in the first place.
It doesn’t look like I traumatized her either.

Did she forget she entered one?
She is Lv1 after all.
I don’t see any reason to hide it either.
Or perhaps, there is another way to get the explore job without entering the labyrinth?

“Today you will mainly observe here. Look at things, and get used to the labyrinth’s atmosphere.”
“Thank you, I understand.”
“I intend on having Rutina fight tomorrow morning. The lower floors are crowded now. So it will be better tomorrow morning. And there is the need to buy clothes.”

I made an excuse so it doesn’t look like I am giving Rutina special treatment.
I wish to let everyone fight equally hard.

No matter how I say it, will it still be special treatment?

It can't be helped.
It is obvious that I brought her against her will.
I want to treat her carefully if possible.

"Yes. I will do my best."

Seems Rutina will try her best.

"If we go from here, there are some close by but there seems to be a lot of them."

Disregarding me who was nervous, Roxanne searched for the enemies.
It doesn't look like she wants to say that we should go buy the clothes and head to Vale's labyrinth immediately.

"Do you know that you can't move directly to a labyrinth using [Field Walk]?"

Meanwhile, Sherry asks Rutina.

"Eh? Is that true?"
"As I thought, you aren't aware of it?"

No wonder.
Rutina didn't know that I can't move to the labyrinth by [Field Walk].
Then it was not a trap that she wasn't surprised even when I used [Warp] directly to the labyrinth.
It was a blind spot.
Sherry is amazing for noticing that.

"To the right, there is low number of monsters."
"Right it is."
"Do not tell anyone that Master can teleport to the labyrinth directly."

After Roxanne informed me, she warned Rutina.
If she doesn't know that traveling directly to the labyrinth is a unique ability, could she carelessly reveal that information?

"Y…yes."
"If I find out that you have been careless, you know what will

happen,”
“…yes, Roxanne-ane-sama.”

It seems Rutina is suffering from trauma after all.
Unfortunately there is nothing I can do for her.

“Then let’s go?”
“Yes.”

With Rutina, we started moving into the labyrinth.
Advancing, a monster appears.
Two Clam Shells.

“Because the monsters on 22nd floor doesn’t cast area effect magic, you can wait here.”

After casting [Dirt Storm] and [Thunder Storm], I explained to Rutina.
I didn’t change the jobless skill from thunder magic yet.
We’ll probably move straight away on this floor anyway.
Because I needed to use Alchemist, I had to remove Wizard.

Dust danced, and lighting glittered.

Magic attacks the shellfish.
The clam shells became hardened, but Rutina didn’t.
Both of them simultaneously.

“It is fine not to move.”

Miria looks at Roxanne for instruction, and Roxanne made a decision.
I didn’t expect such a situation.
While the monster you are fighting are paralyzed, the time waiting is wasted.
When Miria comes close and attacks there is a chance it will turn to stone.

But there is a chance the paralysis disappears by the time she reaches the other monster.
Rather, it may be good to move around behind the monster using this chance.
Though it is not that dangerous a monster, so we don’t need to do

that.
Rutina nodded her head in admiration.

I release the next magic attacks.
Once settled, I launched the next one.
The clam shells fell down without having the chance to move again.

“Is that magic? Magic is certainly great. Though I was surprised we had someone who can use magic. I will also have this power too.”

Rutina’s thoughts have slipped slightly somewhere.
She really didn’t know anything about fighting monsters, is it really possible like that?

“From now on, it is okay to go to a place with many enemies.”

Because Rutina didn’t make noise, I gave Roxanne an instruction.

“Understood, this way then.”

Roxanne takes the lead.
Rutina is not surprised that Roxanne is taking the lead.
I saw a group of 5 as we turned the corner.
Two Clam Shell, a Kettle Mermaid, a Rub Shrub, and a Rtoll Troll.

Did they suddenly increase too much?
It was me who said anything will be fine though.
Since there are four kinds of monsters, Roxanne should have known there is at least four.

However, most of the time the monster will fire magic if it falls behind to the second line.
Because I would like Rutina to feel tension instead of being carefree in the rearguard, the fact that the monster formed two lines to shoot magic is welcome.
They often settle in one row if there is four.
With 5 they will have a two line formation.

I see, five is good, right?
Should I say as expected from Roxanne instead?
Even though it’s fine, I’d look bad if I didn’t give some directions.

“There is a high chance the monster in the back row will cast magic so be careful.”

After casting two [Thunder Storm], I warn Rutina.

“I understand.”

Rutina tightens her grip on her scimitar.
The scimitar is not participating in the battle though.
To get used to it, I wouldn’t mind if you tried attacking with a spear.

Contrary to Rutina’s determination, the monsters are still itching to attack.
The majority of them got paralyzed by the first magic group though, three of them stopped.
Is it because I used two lighting spells?
Furthermore, another monster fell to the second magic barrage.

The last one also stopped before arriving near us with the third magic barrage.
Only one of them managed to restart, and is heading our way.
That one along with all of them, got cleaned up with the fourth magic barrage.

Weak.
These guys are so weak.
There was no need to cause fuss over two lines.
Thinking about it, do the monsters on the 22nd floor have half the hp compared to monsters in higher floors?

When increasing from the 22nd floor to the 23nd it was a problem since it doubled at that time, but going back to the 22nd it will be the opposite.
I became unsatisfied by the 22nd floor without even noticing it.
I should rather rejoice with the absolute power I have.

Aside from that, what should I do regarding the field trip?
It will be a problem if she considers the labyrinth as an easy place.
Although I don’t mind to stop using thunder magic or remove grand wizard, should I really give ourselves a handicap?

“Ah~, Well we are used to fighting on higher floors, so for this floor it

turned out like this.”
“I understand. That’s why it is amazing.”
“What should we do?”

Because we received a compliment when I tried to make excuse, I consulted Roxanne.

“Let me see. Showing this kind of easy battle will not be useful for sure.”

Teacher Roxanne is harsh as expected.

“It will be a problem if she thinks that labyrinths are like that.”
“If she is foolish not to recognize this much, I will not be sad once she is done in by the monsters. You must understand that much, Rutina.”
“Y…yes, Roxanne-ane-sama.”

Strict without Mercy.

“I think it is good to raise it little by little, there is no need to fear area attack magics.”
”If it is the 23rd floor there is no need to mind area attack magic that much. At least, there is no possibility of continuous casting.”

Sherry seems to approve that opinion of going to a higher floor.
Come to think about it, area attack magic didn’t come that easily when we first entered the 23rd floor.
Gumi Slime is the only monster capable of area attack magic in Quratar’s 23rd floor, if Roxanne chooses the monsters carefully, there will be no problem.

“Although I can’t say it’s certain that there will be no continuous casting, you should expect some risk once you enter the labyrinth.”

I don’t know if Roxanne is saying that to be nice or not.
Is it really alright to try the 23rd Floor?
Although I wanted to see how things go until her level rose a little, once villager becomes Lv5 she will go back to being wizard Lv1 either way.

“Come to think of it, you will become a wizard.”

“Of course.”

Rutina puffed her chest with pride.
I want to rub them.

“There is a trial in order to become a wizard, do you know what is it?”
“I don’t know, because I was a child. Um, I am really sorry.”

Don’t you know about it?
It is fine even if you don’t know though.
Is she apologizing so Roxanne doesn’t get angry?

“I heard someone takes you along to the labyrinth, and gives you a suicide pill to kill the monster in front of you. It is so terrible that it causes the children to scream.”

Sherry teaches me.
It is child abuse.
It may even cause a trauma.
Is that the reason why Rutina has explorer Lv1?

As for Sherry, she doesn’t seem to be proud of knowing that.
She is not puffing her chest.
Nope, nothing is there.

She is thinking I want to rub them.
It’s true, I want to massage them.
Those eyes are master abuse.

“Th…then you are fine going to the 23rd Floor?”
“Yes.”

Because Rutina said she is fine, we move to the 23rd floor.
I could also do a boss battle if it’s to show her a severe fight, but because there is a chance of her receiving a sudden attack, it will not be good to hurry and do a boss battle.
A good thing about a boss fight is that we will not receive area attack magic though.
Since only two monsters come out at the 22nd floor battle, it is possible to shut them out.

I guess there is no reason to do the 22nd floor boss battle, right?
I can show her a severe boss fight if I fight Boss Taurus on the 29th floor, but there is the danger of receiving magic along the way to the boss room, so it's better not to go immediately.
In case of a boss battle, I am worried about getting consecutive attacks by chance.

The first group we met on the 23rd Floor, was a formation of 1 gumi slime and 3 clam shell.
Only one gumi slime?
Although I didn't give an exact order, Roxanne's choice is quite nice.
Though it could be a coincidence.

The four girls started to run.
Rutina is left confused behind.

"Because the monsters on the 23rd floor can use area attack magic. It's not good to wait for them, we will intercept them. I will move slowly since I am casting magic."
"Eh? Casting magic? Aren't you an adventurer?"

Rutina is getting more confused.
It looks like she didn't notice I was the one using magic.

"Come on!"
"H…Y..yes."

Hearing Roxanne's voice, Rutina got panicked and ran after the four of them.
Teacher Roxanne is strict after all.

Chapter 194 - Great Hero

"Did it, desu."

The only Gummi Slime gets petrified by Miria with ease.
We didn't receive any area of effect magic attack either.
As you would expect when there's only one monster.
I finish the remaining Clamshell off with magic.

"We close in on the monsters as soon as we find them. This is the basic tactic when fighting on higher floors."
"Yes, Roxanne-ane-sama."
"There are a few monsters on the 23rd floor that use area of effect magic attacks, but you don't need to worry about them."

While I was tidying up the petrified Gummi Slime with Durandal, Roxanne lectures Rutina.
You don't need to close in on the 23rd floor monsters like Clamshell and Kettle Mermaid; however, there's no harm even if you do.
Roxanne can select her opponent.
It helps.

With the lecture finished, Rutina looks at me as if wanting to ask something.
However, I choose not to say anything.
If there's no need to hear it, it's better not to hear it.

"Then, please find the next one, Roxanne. It'll be fine if it's a place with a lot of Gummi Slimes."
"Ah! Yes, I'm sorry."
"Nah, it was actually better since it was her first time."

Finding a lone Gummi Slime was really out of consideration by Roxanne.
Half of Roxanne is gentle.

It'll be scary going to higher floors without Rutina receiving her first area of effect magic attack.
I should let her experience an area of effect magic attack while she's

on the 23rd floor.
It's not necessary, though, to take it on the 23rd floor if her level increases.
Half of me is gentle, too.

Isn't letting her receive an area of effect magic attack not kind?
Besides, in order for her to take an area of effect magic attack, I will have to take one as well.
It can't be helped.
If she is going to enter the labyrinth, she will have to receive one eventually.

The next group of monsters comprises 3 Gummi Slimes.
The five of them, including Rutina, start to run.
Rather, since it's her field trip, isn't it okay for Rutina not to run?

Or so I thought; however, isn't it important to let her get along?
Also, it would be rather dangerous to retreat.
What if there were a pincer attack from the monsters on the opposite end?
I start running after casting two [Thunder Storm]s.

I shouldn't use Lightning magic if I want them to use an area of effect magic attack; however, it will be better to wait until Rutina levels up.
Even though she will go back to being Lv1 after reaching Lv5.
There's no other way but to be (Lv1).

Because one of the monsters drops out of the line, the vanguards confront two Gummi Slimes.
Roxanne and Vesta stand in front of the monsters while Miria attacks from the side.
The Gummi Slimes' status changes rapidly between sleep, paralysis and petrifaction.
At the end, I give the decisive blow with my magic.

In any case, it seems our party depends on inflicting abnormal status.

"S-Somehow, everyone is amazing."

Rutina gets shocked.
The shock is probably due to Roxanne's and Miria's performance.
It can't be helped if it's Roxanne.

"Well, you can use it as reference. But only as a reference."

It's unreasonable for you to use that as a reference.

"Can I really be of any help? My confidence is dwindling down fast."
"It's alright. There's the difference in equipment, too, after all."
"It's exactly as Master said. You should do your best as much as possible."

Was there a need for you to follow up, Roxanne?
I feel an absurd swing (in behavior).

"In any case, you can only do what you are able to do. You'll be alright, I guess."
"Do it, desu."
"I think you'll be alright."

Sherry's and Miria's follow up can't be considered a follow up.
Especially, when someone were to hear Vesta's response objectively, it would seem greatly irresponsible.

"Y-You're right. I'll become a Wizard, too."
"You'll become one eventually. No need to get impatient."
"Yes, thank you very much."

If Rutina's level goes up, she will probably be alright.
She has become Villager Lv3 after the last battle.
She will soon reach Villager Lv5.

Now that it has come down to this, I should inspect Rutina every time while fighting on the 23rd floor.
The area of effect magic attack is hardly coming in.
On the other hand, Rutina is gradually beginning to calm down.
Even though it's a field trip, her eyes are fully fixed at Roxanne during the battle. It won't be a good idea to use her as a comparison.

Roxanne's rate of dodging the monster attacks is insane.

Up till now, she has never received an attack.
Her rate of evasion is probably 150% even when she is doing it poorly.
Because of her ability to dodge the attacks from two monsters simultaneously, an extra 50% has been added.

If all the monsters lined up in the front, Roxanne would be bound to receive an attack; however, that cannot happen on the 23rd floor.
They fall to Lightning Magic, and the battle with the Kettle Mermaids and the Clamshells tends to be short.
Nevertheless, I feel that Roxanne could evade five Gummi Slimes on the 23rd floor if she tried

“Did it, desu.”

Miria petrifies the Gummi Slime without holding back. The large Vesta, dual wielding 2 two-handed swords, looks reliable, too.
I can’t help but understand as to why Rutina lost her spirit.
Should I make her fight forcibly?
Since it’s a field trip, it’s fine.

“……Would I really be fine?”
“It may look difficult at first; however, since the opponent isn’t that difficult, Rutina should be able to do it once you’re used to it. Let’s do our best for Master together.”
“Yes, Roxanne-ane-sama.”

Not missing Rutina’s inaudible complaint, Roxanne encourages her.
Is this a self-development seminar? That’s the feeling it gives, at least.
Suppress weakness into dependence.
Should I add something, too?

“That’s equally impossible. No one expects you to go to that extent.”

I advisee her secretly while Roxanne was in the middle of the battle.

“Really?”
“Because that’s not a standard. Even I cannot hold a candle to her.”

I’m on top of the list of party members doing a poor job during the battle.

Or, do I not appear bad?
It's because I'm recovering MP thanks to the petrified Gummi Slimes that I haven't been discovered.

She must have been surprised when I hit them with Durandal on the previous floor.
Is this much really alright?
There's no need to be this reserved.

"Understood."
"My level is sufficient for direct battle. It's better for one to do what they can."
"Yes, thank you very much, Michio-sama. I will try my best."

I have perfectly brainwashed her to take advantage of her weakness.
I'm dirty.
I feel somewhat guilty, but it's inevitable.
I hope she goes into the right direction.

Rutina has reached Villager Lv4.
It will be better to stay on the 23rd floor till she levels up to Villager Lv5.
Why don't you hurry up and become a Villager Lv5? I'm waiting.

Ooh
I have been checking Party Job Settings repeatedly, and at last, I catch the moment.
The moment when my Hero job turns Lv50.

Hero, is it?
It's not like I particularly wanted to experience this moment.
Because my jobs would increase once Hero reached Lv50.

Great Hero it is.
I'm happy to see it grow so much so soon while it has been away from me.
Still, I wasn't particularly expecting it.

Great Hero is an advanced job for Hero, huh?
Like I acquired Adventurer upon reaching Explorer Lv50, I have

acquired it upon reaching Hero Lv50.

Great Hero Lv1
Effects | Large Increase in HP | Large Increase in MP | Large Increase in Strength | Large Increase in Endurance
Large Increase in Intelligence | Large Increase in Spirit | Large Increase in Dexterity | Large Increase in Agility
Skills | Overdrive | Item Box Operation

As you would expect from the advanced job for Hero. The effects are incredible.
It's a feast of Large Increase effects.
I can have high expectations of it.

I wonder why it has Item Box Operation skill.
I wonder why.
I wonder why a Great Hero is able to use the Item Box.

I want to protest to the Great Heroes.
Are you making fun of the Item Box?
Are you mocking the hard work the Adventurers put in to get the Item Box?

Nah, it's fine because I'm using it, too. It's a big help.
Since I'm running out of slots in the Adventurer's Item Box, I'm rather grateful.
Great Hero is an amazing job.
If Great Hero had Overdrive and Basic Fire Magic, it would be even greater.

As for Overdrive, judging by the name, it's probably an upgrade for Overwhelming.
I add Seventh Job and select Great Hero Lv1.
Initially, I decided to remove Hero; however, since Great Hero is low level, I decide to keep it in use.
That's why I have increased the number of jobs so as to keep using Hero, too.

"Did it, desu."

Luckily, Miria petrifies a Gummi Slime as soon as the battle starts.

It's Durandal's turn.
I put the items inside and take out the holy sword.

By the way, I seem to be able to put many items inside Great Hero's Item Box.
It doesn't seem to be level dependent like Explorer's but Adventurer's 50×50 Item Box.
I haven't counted it yet, but it appears to be so.

Assuming that, is having Explorer Lv50 or Adventurer a prerequisite to acquire Great Hero?
It would really be a difficult to get job if there were such an additional condition as that.
Like leveling up Swordsman in order to get the advanced job for Monk?
Well, there's no need to worry about it right now.

While wielding Durandal, I invoke Overdrive and strike the petrified monster.
The Gummi Slime dies in one blow.
Whoops
One hit?

The monster turns into smoke and dissipates.
The attack power might have increased.
Is Overdrive a skill that raises speed and attack power for an instant?

I think it increases the speed in same manner as Overwhelming.
It wasn't clear, though, because the monster didn't move.
Did I get faster?

I look at Roxanne and the girls, but they aren't surprised at all.
Was the increased speed my imagination?
Not necessarily. Maybe because they know about Overwhelming?
Because of that, nothing seemed unusual to them?

"Eh? That speed……"

Rutina is truly surprised.
The speed did seem to increase like Overwhelming.

If it increases attack power, too, then Overdrive is totally a rank above Overwhelming.
However, the MP consumption may be higher just as well.

“Oh, this?”
“It’s not standard……”

Oh, right. I told Rutina that my level is sufficient.

“Of course it’s to be expected because it’s Master.”

I receive a follow up from Roxanne-sensei.
If it can be considered a follow up, that is.

In the next battle, I test if the magic power increases or not.
Upon invoking Overdrive, when I see the approaching monster and the five girls in slow motion, I get ascertained that the speed does increase.
The magic power increases as well.

However, the magic invocation speed doesn’t.
It doesn’t look likely for me to cast a fourth spell in the state of Overdrive.
It would simply be the strongest if it were possible.
So, using Overdrive to boost magic power seems complicated, huh?

“No worries. When I become a Wizard…”

Rutina mutters during the break between the battles.
She’s optimistic.
Her response to Roxanne’s follow up is pretty good.

And finally, Rutina levels up.
To Villager Lv5.
She has acquired the Wizard job.
Actually, Rutina has acquired two jobs: Wizard and Forest Ranger.

Because the Duke had Forest Ranger job, too, it seems to be a racial job for elves.
There’s nothing special about its effects and skills.
So, there’s no need, I guess.

“Rutina, try to cast [Breeze Storm].”

I set Rutina’s job to Wizard Lv1 and tell her to cast a spell.
Quratar’s 23rd floor is a bit of a nuisance.
The Clamshells and Kettle Mermaids have weakness against Earth attribute, but the Gummi Slimes don’t.
Because a Clamshell is resistant to Fire attribute, and a Kettle Mermaid is resistant to Water attribute, it will be better to use Wind magic here.

It will be fine for me to defeat the Clamshells and Kettle Mermaids with my magic.
As for Rutina, she should focus her magic on the Gummi Slimes.

“Ehh, th-this…”

Rutina opens her eyes wide in surprise.
It seems to have gone well.

“Is Rutina finally a Wizard?”
“That’s right.”

I answer Sherry’s enquiry.

“I’m glad for you, Rutina.”
“That was fast.”
“As expected, desu.”
“I think it’s amazing.”

The four girls congratulate her.

“Y-Yes, thank you very much, everyone. However, I’ve heard that I cannot become a Wizard unless I visit the guild.”
“It doesn’t matter because it’s Master.”
“But I only just joined the party. I thought it would take a considerable amount of time before I became a Wizard.”
“Because it’s Master.”
“As to why it took such a short time, it’s probably because Rutina is amazing.”

Wait, wait.
For now, I curb Roxanne’s remarks.

Don’t point everything to me!
Even if it was thanks to Gained Experience 20x.

“So, I did have the power like I thought. Okay, thank you very much. Right, I can use that sparkling magic now.”

By sparkling magic, she probably means Lightning magic.

“Ah, that would be difficult in Rutina’s present condition.”
“Is that so?”
“You have to chant the incantation which floats up in your mind when a group of Gummi Slimes appears next.”
“Oh, that reminds me, there has been no incantation thus far.”

She has noticed something inconvenient.

“Err, that also is impossible for Rutina, I guess.”
“I-I see……”

Actually, it’s already quite impressive that you can use magic now.

Chapter 195 - Snail

I convinced Rutina that she will be able use glittering magic eventually.

“This is the weapon for a wizard. Use this inside the labyrinth.”
“Yes.”

I pass her the Damascus stick.
Again, I asked Roxanne to quickly find the next monsters.
It’s better to make her test it this time.

The next monsters are Two Gumi Slimes, a Clam Shell and a Kettle Mermaid.
It is just right.
Using wind magic is fitting for this combination.

“Okay. Try saying it.”
“Yes. To seize the Aroma of the wind, put military power against the foe <<Enemy>> in place, jet, [Breeze Storm]. ”

The four girls began to run, and Rutina started to chant.
Was it an incantation like that?
I didn’t know since I never used it.

It seems Rutina doesn’t have a problem with Brahim Language.
She was taught the precise words since she was the Earl’s Daughter.
Its seems that Brahim is used when there’s a conversation between nobles.

Matching my magic with Rutina’s, I cast two thunder spells.
There’s no incantation resonance problems so far.
I wonder if it was fine because I have incantation omission?
It will probably work out, but I am feeling relieved now that I’ve actually tried it.

“Your physical condition?”
“I don’t feel any problem.”

I asked, but I don't believe one elementary magic will dry up her MP.
I was able to use it normally when Wizard was Lv1.
I'm ready to give restorative medicine mouth to mouth when her MP is not enough.

"You will feel sick if you used too much magic, so be careful."
"Oh I remember hearing that before."
"Others can't understand this sensation, so you need to watch your health. It is necessary not to spend too much and save for emergencies, but no need to go that far right now. We also have restorative medicine."
"I understand."

Rather, go ahead and spend too much.
It will be good if you use it too much and depend on restorative medicine.
She must depend on it.
I'm prepared for it.

I chased the four girls after casting another two thunder spells.
It seems that Rutina hasn't cast another one.
It may be necessary to discuss with her how frequent she needs to cast.
Even if Rutina used magic, if I don't reduce the number that I cast it will be wasted.

Because of limited MP, Rutina won't be able to use magic every time.
Basically, when there are several monsters I cast as much as I can, against a group should I make her cast once or twice?
Or maybe three times against a group?
I will need to confirm it by comparing how many I cast.

It will have to wait until we arrive on the 29th Floor.
It is good for now.
However, will this arrangement work or not?

As we ascend the floors, I must alter it every time.
Rutina has just become a Wizard and I guess her level will rise fast, with this we'll be able to clear floors in a crazy speed.
There is also my Great hero level as well.

We will use different magic depending on the combination of monsters attributes.

In conclusion, there is no need to make arrangements now.
Whenever the level is raised it will be a mess, in order to prevent the mess I should control it so it doesn't go out of order.
If Sherry notices, it will be troublesome.

It should be fine if I think about it later after I advance more.
For harder battles, even if I manage to finish it one spell faster it will be plenty.
No need to fuss over it right now.

"Thunder Storm."

Because Roxanne made the Kettle Mermaid sleep, I issued a warning.
Rutina looked back, puzzled.
This cannot be the first time I issued a warning.
Because I said that I don't need the incantation, was she wondering about it for sometime?

"……"

However, without asking anything Rutina rushed forward.

No no.
It's fine if you ask me.
No one will get angry.
Because you probably have a reason.

The opportunity for the defendant to give an explanation.
I will not steal the right of trial from everyone.
I run after Rutina.
This monsters group fell without Rutina casting any magic.

"When a monster is in the sleep state, it can wake up when I use magic, so I use the incantation in order for the vanguard to hear."
"Understood."

I give Rutina an explanation at the very start.
If there is anyone that wants to say anything it will be Sherry, but she

seems busy.

“Does incantation resonance really mean resonance due to the incantation?”

Sherry muttered something.

“So, what do you think about magic after using it?”
“Yes. Now I can be helpful in spite of my poor abilities.”
“I expect much from you.”
“Thank you very much.”

Rutina bows her head.
I didn’t need to particularly give an explanation?
She seems rather desperate, and worried she will do poorly.
Consideration is really hard.

“You only use magic once, is it hard using magic several times?”
“No. But I think that I’m gradually getting used to it.”

She seems to be thinking about it in various ways.
Her level will go up while she gets used to Wizard.
I guess that is also good?

Actually, Rutina used magic twice against the next group.
The MP she used before is probably not restored yet.

“How do you feel?”
“It’s slightly tiring, but I can still go on.”

She still doesn’t regret being born, so she can still go on.
Even after the MP decreased, is it still within the limit?

“Don’t over do it. Get enough rest.”

You can over do it.
Rather, I want you to push yourself to the limit.

“I am sorry that I can’t help much.”

Is the reason for the apology because you feel a little depressed?
But then, is it difficult to lose MP and need to take restorative medicine by using elementary magic spells?

But having said that, I can't force her to take it either.

"It will be like this at the start. You'll get better once you get used to it."
"Thank you very much."

Afterwards, Rutina hardly used any magic.
More like she didn't try to use magic, may be because of her MP limitation.
She's really not forcing herself.
She sometimes casts twice.

"It doesn't look like the battle time got shorter even with Rutina casting magic twice."

After the two magic spells, Sherry speaks while picking up the item.
Oops.
Are you seriously counting?
It would be fine if you focused on studying the incantation resonance though.

"Ah~. We will be going up eventually. It is better not to think about it now."
"I am sorry. I didn't check the cast numbers."
"Getting used to it comes first now. Forget about anything else."

I came up with a follow up because Rutina apologised.
She might notice her level going up quickly if she counts.
Though the number of spells needed to defeat monsters will not decrease that much by leveling up once or twice.

However, it's certain that the time is decreasing in some aspect, but I don't know when it happens.
I can also run away to the higher floor when her level goes up.

"However, even if I cast twice it doesn't compare to one spell from Michio-sama……"

Rutina noticed a strange matter and got depressed.
Over used her MP?

"Ah~. the Magic I am using is kinda special. You will be alright."

I am using a two spell barrage in fact.
In order to shorten the combat time on the 23rd floor, I need to cast two thunder spells to do some damage.
One basic magic spell from the low level Rutina can't be compared to it.

Sherry knows about this.
Though I didn't explain it properly.
Rutina shouldn't be able to guess that.
But she will be able to notice it soon.

"Is that true? Can you teach me how to do it?"
"You will not be able to use it."
"Really?"

Rutina feels down, but I can't help it if you can't use it.

"You should consider the number of magic when we reach higher levels. With this speed we are aiming at the level we're currently at, therefore it's still quite sudden for you."

It will be fine counting later.
After her level increases far enough.

"I understand."
"Thank you as well, Sherry."
"It's nothing."

I thank Sherry, and continue hunting.
I cannot complain when I am not sure what she is investigating.
When I check after the battles, Rutina became Wizard Lv4.
Her level is increasing at a good speed.

When Rutina used two wind spells against a Gumi Slime, it seems to reduce my thunder spells by one.
An almost good result this time?
I thought she might be able to match me when I use one thunder spell if she uses one wind spell since it is the weakness of the Gumi Slime, but I guess it is due to our level.
I am glad there is no illogical difference.

At this rate, will the number go crazy and one of her wind spells

become equal to one of my thunder spells?
But still, I don't believe her single wind spell will ever equal two of my thunder spells.
Three of her wind spells equaled one of my thunder spells at the start.

How about 4 wind spells for 5 of my thunder spells? Or 5 wind spells to 6 thunder spells from me? There will be many various differences if I investigate it.
I can only hope it becomes like that.
Will it be fine if we advance like this?

"Area attack magic doesn't happen very much on this floor, you want to go up one floor?"

I asked Rutina.
We haven't received any area attack magic from Gumi Slimes yet.
But that is expected as they didn't get to fight at all.
Because Rutina's level keeps going up, it will be good to go up another floor.

"Higher floor?"
"You will be alright, Rutina. If we ascend another floor soon, you will get used to it faster."
"Understood. Roxanne-ane-sama."

It will be fine if Rutina refused, but Roxanne forcefully decided.
It is not good to force her though.
I don't know if Area attack magic will come flying if we stayed on the 23rd floor, but will it be fine if we go to a higher floor.
We move to the 24th floor.

I took the opportunity while changing the floor and changed the effect on Jobless.
I changed it from Hero's medium intelligence increase to Great Hero's great intelligence increase.
The job effect is level dependent.

When I set explorer's item box operation as jobless's skill, the item box size became the level of jobless and not explorer, so the effect will follow jobless's level and not the original job level.

Great hero's great intelligence increase doesn't even compare to hero, but what will happen when I change jobless Lv48 medium intelligence to great intelligence increase?
It is better not to change it often while fighting.
But it will not become a problem when the floor changes.

"Quratar's 24th floor monster is Tur Turtle. Because it's weakness is earth magic, use [Sand Storm] instead of [Breeze Storm] when there are many."
"I understand."
"Then, Roxanne. It will be fine with several monsters right from the start."

After explaining to Rutina, I ask Roxanne for guidance.
The explanation itself is secondhand information from Sherry.
It can't be helped if I don't have anything else to add.

"That way seems to have many Tur Turtle."

Roxanne keeps advancing like this.
As for the monsters that appeared, there were 3 Tur Turtles.
4 Girls started to run.
Rutina didn't run and it seems she started to cast magic.

I cast two [Thunder Storms] as well.
Even though I want it to cast area attack magic after going to the 24th floor, it should be fine since there is three of them.
I left Jobless's skill as thunder magic.

After the lighting glittered, the dust danced.
Because she has to use an incantation, Rutina invokes magic a little slower.
Is only one of them paralyzed?

There is a dilemma that the number of monsters that get paralysis gets less when fewer monsters appear.
I'd rather use the thunder magic when against a group with more monsters.
When I think about how it will be easy to use area attack magic, it doesn't really matter.
The remaining two Tur Turtles got paralyzed on the next two spells.

“Did it, desu.”

Miria turned one of them to stone soon after that.
But, since only one got petrified this time, I cleaned all of them up with magic.

“I have never seen glittering dust before.”

Rutina said after the battle ended.
When I fought the Clam Shell group on the 22nd floor, I used a combination of earth and lighting magic.
It was the same combination this time.
That’s probably it.

“Ah~. Right.”
“Can you tell me how to do that?”

Should I call her unexpectedly sharp? Or she didn’t understand it before?
It is troublesome to explain.

“Huh? Only the principle. ”
“Will I be able to do that as well?”

A more difficult question.

“Ah~ that could also be impossible.”

This reminds me of a story from long ago.

Chapter 196 - Bottomless

“Is… that so?”

As she learns that she cannot use the same magic as me, Rutina gets depressed.

Since a Wizard cannot cast two spells simultaneously, it cannot be helped.
She has no choice but to give up.
I have no way of following it up.

“It’s alright. Just being able to use magic is helpful in its own right.”

Roxanne-sensei, this cannot be considered a follow up.

“O-Oh well, it’ll be fine. Roxanne, next please.”

I assign the next task to Roxanne.
If she’s occupied, she won’t be able to ‘follow up’.

Roxanne guides us to the next group. It comprises two Tur Turtles and a Gummi Slime.
Since there are three, I strike them down with Thunder magic.
Because the three get easily paralyzed right after we encounter them, Miria doesn’t get a chance to petrify any of them.

Maybe because I have Large Increase in Intelligence set as Jobless effect, the number of spells I need to cast hasn’t increased even though we’re on a higher floor.
Actually, I should rather be relieved since it hasn’t decreased.
Against the next group of three Tur Turtles and two Gummi Slimes, I use Thunder and Ice magic.
It’s about time we encountered a monster that would use an area of effect magic attack.

“Did it, desu.”

However, before we could receive a magic attack, it ends with Miria showcasing her brilliant performance.

Three of them have gotten petrified.
With Miria having petrified three monsters, my next Thunder spell wipes them out.
I assumed that the monsters would be more active if I reduced the number of Thunder spells; instead, did my not delaying them only served to increase Miria's preys?

"Is this chunk of ice perhaps Ice magic?"

Rutina asks after the battle.
Ah, right. Was this her first time seeing my Ice magic?

"That's right. Rutina will soon be able to use it."
"But I thought only a Grand Wizard would be able to use Ice magic."
"That's right. Therefore, Rutina will be able to manage it, somehow."

Rutina gets surprised when I tell her that she will be able to use it, somehow.
Although she is a Wizard now, she will be able to use it once she becomes a Grand Wizard.
So, it's not a lie.

"It's okay. You'll be able to use it."
"Do you mean to say 'after a long time'?"
"Since Master said it's okay, it IS okay."

Adds Roxanne.

"Y-Yes, Roxanne-ane-sama."
"Well, I mean to say 'before long'."

The reason as to why I believe Rutina will become a Grand Wizard quickly is owing to Gained Experience 20x.
On a side note, she's a Wizard Lv5 at the moment.

"Err, was that *pikapika* sparkling and glittering magic perhaps-"
"Thunder magic."
"S-So, it really was like I suspected, huh? Then, saying that I'll be able use it 'before long'……"

I wonder if she really understands what soon means.
Rutina is feeling depressed because she thinks it will take a long

time.
So, I tell her that she will be able to use that *pikapika* sparkling and glittering magic before long.

Rutina seems to be aware that a Grand Wizard can use Thunder magic.
It isn't strange for her to know about Thunder magic since she already knows about Ice magic.
Leaving whether she has seen it before or not aside.
Why is it that she didn't know it was Thunder magic until it was mentioned?

"By any chance, have you never seen Thunder magic?"
"I thought it would be a magic with an even louder sound."

Sound?
Speaking of which, I have heard about 'raimei' being thunder and 'inadzuma' being lightning.
Since it is accompanied by thunder, it is appropriate to call it [Thunder Storm].
It may be unrelated to Brahim, though.

It may probably be normal for her to have never seen thunder since she was an earl's daughter.
That she were sheltered in the castle, she would only hear the sound.
Rutina doesn't answer my question whether she has seen thunder before or not.

"If you mean 'gorogoro' rumbling sound, it's not possible unless it's a Thunder magic of an even larger scale."
"Really?"
"Is that really so? Since it is magic, you should be able to produce just the sound."

Because I babble something out carelessly, Sherry nibbles.
That was dangerous, wasn't it?
My superficial knowledge has gotten exposed.
When will I be able to talk carelessly in this world.

"The thunder's main body is what inflicts the damage to a monster.

It’s only sparsely necessary to produce the sound.”

Although the sound is part of the attack, the core of Thunder magic is lightning.
And the paralysis is thanks to electricity.

“So, that sound is only an attachment.”
“Rather than an attachment, it’s the result of lightning.”
“The sound is a resultant?”
“Thunder magic is basically thunder; you can hear a *pachipachi* crackling sound if you listen carefully. If it were on the same scale as natural thunder, it would probably produce *baribari* ripping sound.”
“So, it’s like that, huh?”

What a relief.
I have somehow managed to convince Sherry.

“Somehow, both of you are amazing.”

Rutina’s query has successfully been diverted.
Thanks to Sherry.

“At times like this, it’s better to leave them alone.”

I can hear you, Roxanne.

“Understood, Roxanne-ane-sama.”
“Ignore, desu.”
“I think it’s alright.”

That was harsh, Miria, Vesta, and for no real reason.
After having wiped two groups out with Thunder magic, we encounter four Tur Turtles and a Clamshell next.
Because there are four Tur Turtles, I cast [Dirt Storm].

Oh
Not only that we don’t get hit by any area of effect magic attack, the monsters die quickly, too.
It was fast also when I used Wind magic against the Gummi Slimes on the 23rd floor.
Rutina doesn’t get to cast any spell this time as well.

In other words, my magic power has gone up.
It's most likely thanks to Large Increase in Intelligence set as Jobless effect.
It's also thanks to the rising level of Great Hero and Rutina's Wizard; however, the effect of Jobless is the most potent.

On the 23rd and 24th floors, the number of Thunder spells I cast – 2 – hasn't changed; however, the number of Thunder spells and the spell of an attribute the monster is weak against combined seems to have changed.
Whether the damage required to defeat is equivalent to 0.1 spell or 0.9 spell, the number of spells required will round up to 1; hence, the difference will be 1 spell wide.
It may also have to do with that.

I steal a glance at Sherry; however, she doesn't seem to be paying attention.
Has she not noticed?
Or, does she not feel the need to meddle at this point?

Now that I think about it, Sherry knows that I can adjust the magic power, too.
Earlier, I adjusted it on a lower floor to beat a monster half-dead in order to acquire a job.
She may think it is the same as that time.
Do I not need to mind the reduction in the number of spells and Rutina leveling up?

That's it.
It's part of an experiment.
It's purely an experiment.
Let's go with that.

Nothing can be done regarding the change in magic power.
I resolve myself and continue hunting.
You can say that I've become serious.

Rutina becomes a Wizard Lv7 shortly after.
As expected, leveling up is faster on the 24th floor.
We have yet to receive an area of effect magic attack.

“Area of effect magic attacks aren’t coming in on this floor either. So, how about we move up a floor since you’ve gotten used to it?”

I propose to Rutina.

“You’re right. I think I have gotten a little used to it. The suffocation due to casting magic has gone. I think I’ll be able to do it. However, I’m not sure if it’s okay to move to a higher floor.”

It’s simply because your level has increased.
Well, that’s fine, too.

“……”
“Ah, n-no. I would love to move to a higher floor.”

When Roxanne glares at her, Rutina corrects herself.
It doesn’t look good going to a higher floor.
Is it okay to move, but you don’t want to? Or, is it not okay to move?
I want her to take responsibility for her own words, not someone else’s.

“That’s right.”

When she corrects herself, Roxanne nods.
It’s not good to pressurize her.
If she feels danger, I want her to actively oppose.

Oh well. Since Rutina said it’s okay, it should be okay.
We move on to the 25th floor.

“Quratar’s 25th floor monster……was it Cape Carp or Black Frog?”
“It was Black Frog.”
“If I’m not mistaken, its weakness……was Fire attribute?”
“Yes.”

I brief while Sherry follows up.
I’m pathetic.
Nah, I was just confused as to which one was where.
If the 25th floor monster is Black Frog, the 26th floor monster will be Cape Carp. Probably.

“Therefore, if there is a large number of Black Frogs or Gummi

Slimes, cast [Fire Storm]; if there are more Tur Turtles, cast [Sand Storm]. It's Sherry's duty to collect the information about the floor monsters and their weaknesses. Sherry is very knowledgeable and smart. From now on, I will have Sherry brief."

I use this opportunity to leave the briefing to Sherry.
I cannot lose more face than I already have.
That's wrong way of putting it. It's called 'right man for the right job'.

I know that the 26th floor monster is Cape Carp.
Maybe.
I also know the ones on 27th floor and up, of course.
After all, we have been fighting all these monsters all this time.

"Okay."
"I understand. [Fire Storm] it is."

Somehow, both Sherry and Rutina have gotten it.

"Then, take us to a place with fewer monsters, Roxanne."
"Okay. This way then."

We proceed under Roxanne's lead.
The group we come across comprises two Black Frogs and a Tur Turtle.
Since it's a black frog, Rutina should be able to recognize it.

The five girls start running.
After casting two [Thunder Storm]s, I follow after them.
Since there is small number of monsters, Thunder magic would do.

Why is Rutina not casting a spell?
Is she preserving it?
Oh well. There are only a few enemies anyway.

If it were me, I would cast [Fire Storm] regardless.
Is she conducting herself elegantly as one would expect from an earl's daughter?
Don't be greedy.

"Did it, desu."

Was two too few? This time, Miria petrifies both of them.
As expected.
Don't be greedy, though.
The Estoc of Petrifaction is thirsting for blood.

On the next group, Rutina uses magic.
She seems to be able to cast [Fire Storm] without any problem.
We continue to hunt on the 25th floor.

"Be it 23rd, 24th or 25th floor, the number of spells doesn't seem to have increased."

Asks Sherry when I finish almost all the monsters off with my Thunder magic.
Even Miria cannot petrify all the monsters all the time, I guess.

Fuck.
Or so I thought; however, she doesn't seem to be accusing me with cold eyes.
She appears to be asking me genuinely.

"It's a little experiment. I'll be carrying it on for a while."

Right. Experiment.
Even if my magic power changes, there won't be any problem.
It's an experiment.

When Rutina's level increases and the number of spells decreases, I'll call the experiment off.
Perfect, no?

"Is that so?"

Sherry withdraws easily.
She understands the importance of an experiment.

However, Roxanne is looking at me with an astonished expression.
Again? This feeling.
Hey Roxanne, your heart is a bit too loud.

"Roxanne, next."

I ask of Roxanne, who doesn't seem to understand the importance

of an experiment, to guide us.
We continue with the hunting.
We'll keep at it until Rutina reaches Wizard Lv10.
We'll continue even after she reaches Wizard Lv10.

We advanced to the 24th floor when her Wizard turned Lv4, 25th floor when it turned Lv7; therefore, it should be fine to advance to the 26th floor when it turns Lv10.
However, thus far, we haven't received any area of effect magic attack.
It won't be a good idea to move to a higher floor just yet.

We may receive one if we stay on the 25th floor for a while.
If Rutina's level goes up and the number of spells cast changes, It'll be enough reason to end the experiment.
To be specific, it (the number of spells) will decrease.
Come on, batch (group of monsters)!

"Here it comes."

Roxanne warns.
A blue magic formation manifests under the Black Frog's white abdomen.
Rather than the number of spells decreasing, comes in an area of effect magic attack.

Water dances around us.
My body gets squeezed tightly as I feel slight pain.
Albeit light, it's pain nonetheless.
Besides, it's momentary.

It's not to the extent that I cannot bear it.
The damage shouldn't be heavy either.
Has the area of effect magic attack on the 25th floor always amounted to only this much?
Or, maybe it's the effect of Great Hero's Large Increase in Endurance.

I counterattack with a [Fire Storm]; immediately after, the frog collapses.

“How was the monster attack? Are you alright?”

I confirm with Rutina.

“Yes. If it’s just that, I can probably go on.”
“Great. Are you sure?”

Rutina didn’t seem to receive heavy damage.
Well, she had Plating applied on her.
Also, Rutina seems to be gaining confidence.
“As expected of me,” is what she was muttering.

“I don’t think we need [Area of Effect Heal]; what should I do?”

Enquires Roxanne.
I didn’t receive much damage, so I don’t need recovery.
It’s probably the same for Roxanne, too.
As far as Rutina’s recovery is concerned, Monk’s Heal would be better than Area of Effect Heal.

“Can you cast one for now? It’s our first for today, so it should be fine.”
“Understood.”

Because I don’t have Monk selected at the moment, it’ll be difficult to change jobs and cast Heal.
Therefore, I ask of Roxanne to cast [Area of Effect Heal].

“D-Did no one receive enough damage to require recovery?”
“Well, that’s probably so.”

I re-apply Plating on Rutina.

“Because it’s a party with a Dragon Knight.”
“I’ve indeed heard about the stability of a party with a Dragon Knight. Does that have to do with the damage getting reduced? Then, was that also the reason for my receiving less damage?”

Damn you, Sherry. After Rutina finally gained some confidence, you pushed her down again.

Chapter 197 - Deceptive Methods

“You received an area attack magic, do you believe that you can handle one on a higher floor?”
“Y-yes. I will be fine. I need to work hard in order to reach the point where I can be even slightly helpful.”

Rutina got back on her feet and acknowledged moving to a higher floor.
That’s some recovery power she had.
Quite strong.

“Seems like we still have some time too.”
“Yes. We still have a little time till noon.”

After confirming it with Roxanne, we don’t have a problem with time.
It is necessary to buy essential items for Rutina today, but it’s hot during the day.
It would be nice in the evening where it’s slightly cooler

Perhaps, the shop would be crowded if everyone is thinking the same?
Should I do it during the day under the hot weather when there is less people?

“Is it fine shopping in the evening? Or, Should we finish it early?”
“Let me see. It’s better to change our clothes early and fight diligently in the labyrinth.”

I received a Spartan answer when I consulted Roxanne.
Defeating a demon bare-handed has already been done by Roxanne and the others.
Roxanne understands it very well that I plan to let Rutina do it as well.
Is this what they call striking while the iron is hot?

The problem is, will we be able to finish shopping on time!?
Rather, isn’t it better to go when it’s sunset?
Specially for my waiting time.

Oh well, I may let them do shopping occasionally with all their hearts.
When the time is up, it is up.

“How about observing the 26th floor for a little, then head to shopping?”
“Understood.”
“Once we go to the 26th floor, a place with a lot of monsters is good.”
“Yes.”

We move to the 26th floor.
Sherry explains the Cape Carp to Rutina.
I am glad that it was Cape Carp after all.
It wasn’t necessary to explain it to Sherry.

We fight against the Cape Carp as the main monster several times.
My thunder magic played a large role in the fights.
There is no need to receive Area attack magic again, since we already received it.
It is better if the monsters stop moving by using Thunder magic.

One after the other the monsters became paralyzed.
I defeated the monsters with Thunder Magic.
Oh~ Shit.
Rutina didn’t use magic, but the number of Thunder Magic needed to defeat monsters did not change.

It’s still the same?
With this the number didn’t change for the 23rd, 24th, 25th,and 26th floors.
Indeed, that’s unexpected.

It was thanks to the effect of Great Intelligence Increase from Jobless for the 24th and 25th floors.
For it to not increase on the 26th floor, is it thanks to Rutina’s Wizard Lv11 and my Great Hero becoming LV11?
At level 11 a little effect will appear.

It’s worth mentioning that my Great Hero and Rutina’s Wizard level is the same.

Since I spent some bonus points to decrease the necessary experience, it is fine to think that the Great Hero is harder to level than the Wizard.

I even think that Great Hero is tougher to level compared to Hero.
But there is no denying that it's an excellent job in many ways.
Either way, it will raise smoothly til Lv30.

"How about we end it at this point?"

Luckily for me, Sherry didn't say anything even though the number didn't change.
Taking advantage of this, I decided to retreat.
Rutina had observed the Cape Carp enough as well.

I cast [Warp], and went home.
As I came out in the living room, I release all the tension by taking a deep breath.

"Was I able to help to some extent?"

Rutina, asked while being nervous.
Not me, but Roxanne.

"It was alright. You did plenty enough."
"Okay. Thank you very much."
"Let's do our best together."

Roxanne lead Rutina skillfully.
Rather than leading, I guess it can be called copying.
Roxanne is expecting everyone to fight.

"This party has a lot of secrets. I agree with Roxanne-ane-sama and Sherry-ane-sama, we cannot say careless things. I will be cautious as well."

Rutina braced herself.
What did Roxanne and Sherry say to her?
Being careful is important.

After taking a little break, we go shopping.
Because walking under the sunlight is too hot.

How should I do it?
I can [Warp] to the dungeon and exit using the entrance, but I don't really want to do that, since I'm not paying any entrance fees.

"Should we proceed to the adventurers guild and go around to the grocery store? Or do we start at the Merchant Guild and then to the clothes shop?"
"Let's see. We better go to the clothes shop."

Listening to Roxanne, it was unusual to go from the Merchant guild then to the clothes shop immediately.
Or rather, am I going to shop for clothes until evening when the sunlight lessens?
But Roxanne was the one who suggested that Rutina should fight.

I [Warp] to the Merchant guild, and proceed to the clothes shop.
There is no air-conditioning inside the shops in this world.
Nevertheless, it is better that there is shade.
I feel pretty cool.

"For clothes, it is important to have 3 tops and bottoms first. After that, I'll buy one top and bottom for everybody except for Rutina."
"Thank you very much."

All the girls bow their heads.
Shopping just for Rutina could cause complaints.
Believing that they understood, we came to get the required items.
A problem won't occur easily if everyone bought one piece.

Rutina bowed her head, but Quratar's western style clothing may be a downgrade for a former Earl's daughter.
Unless, it is tailored in the clothes shop in the Imperial Capital.
I will go to the clothes shop in the Imperial Capital later, but I need to finish this and that.
And unlike Roxanne and the other girls, Rutina may possess hostility.

"Choose whatever you like."

At least in the clothes shop I let them choose freely.
Everyone is picking and Roxanne is in the middle.

"It is ready-made, but it is new. everyone wears nice clothes.

However I assumed that I won't be able to wear decent clothes because I turned into a slave. I will be made fun of if I wear unacceptable clothes to the Lord's meeting. It may be fine with this."

Seems like Rutina is quite satisfied.
She seems fine with the clothes shops in Quratar.
It appears that she's still thinking about the Lords' Assembly.

"Master, how about this?"

Roxanne brought clothes to me.
Because I said everyone, it seems I'm the first one to choose.

"It's not bad. I don't have any problems in what Roxanne has selected. I am fine with this."
"Thank you very much. We will be choosing immediately."

I think that it took time, but it seems that Roxanne only selected clothes for me and the other girls.

"Don't worry about time, select carefully."

It is not like we extremely need to go to the labyrinth by all means.
I would like to let Roxanne do the shopping carefully and take her time.
Basically, I was questioning myself whether I should go or not.

"I think this matches the color of Roxanne-ane-sama's bottom."
"You also think so?"
"This color is effective in standing out."

Rutina is giving a lot of advice.
I wonder if it's a duty she had as an Earl's daughter?
For me, I don't really have any idea.

"Isn't this a little childish?"
"Nope. I think it is lovely."
"Really?"

Sherry asked for advice, I guess she's reliable.

"Miria-ane-sama will look good with this color."
"Onee-chan, desu."

“I think this will be alright.”

Vesta also asked Rutina for advice.

“Possibly it’s better with this one?”
“Thank you very much.”

In the end, the sun had already begun to set by the time they finished choosing.
It’s a delicate time.
It is not as late as I thought.

There’s still time to enter the labyrinth for a moment.
Or Did Roxanne cut it closely on purpose?
The battle can wait.
After that, we return home after going to the general store.

“You can change into the clothes we bought in the room over there. I will have you fight a little in the labyrinth instead of observing. I don’t think you will face any problems since you seem able to cope properly.”
“Understood.”
“Please finish quickly.”

As we came back home, I sent Rutina to the next room.
Although I said today is observation day, but it should be fine.
Particularly, she’s not scared to fight.

“Thank you very much.”
“Onee-chan, desu.”

Rutina received the clothes from Miria, and went to the next room.
Because I didn’t go to the general store first, Rutina didn’t have a backpack.
Sherry, Miria and Vesta split Rutina’s clothes and brought them back.
Roxanne carried my clothes.

“Because we don’t have much time, she should change her clothes here.”

Roxanne said a terrible thing.
I see.

I could have used that method?

“You are right. Well that is fine for now.”

I didn’t think of that.
Because we are living under the same roof, doing that much may be fine.

Apparently, Roxanne doesn’t mind.
Is there any resistance?
Or possibly, does she think that it is natural to put my hands on Rutina since she’s a slave?

In the first place, who’s fault was it that there is no time!?
I wonder if we spent all that time for this purpose?
There is no chance.

“Thank you for waiting.”
“Oh. It suits you well.”
“Thank you very much.”

Rutina came back.
Rutina wearing pants looks beautiful.
A Beautiful girl is pretty no matter what she wears.

Her body line is neat and attractive.
From her butt to the calf, a slender leg draws a nice curve line.
Not too thin, not too fat, legs that are shaped beautifully.
She looks like a model.

At Quratar’s labyrinth, we first fight in the 7th floor.
I killed the Slow Rabbit Roxanne found with 1 [Fire Ball].
A single blow?
After that I tried it out on the 8th, 9th, and 10th floor but only the monster on the 10th stayed alive after I shoot one.

Looks like we can beat them up till Level 9.
The power dramatically increased by having Great Hero, Jobless and Rutina joining.
Of course I killed the LV10 Escape Goat that tried to run away.

“I plan on letting Rutina fight, is the 10th floor alright?”

“As if the 10th floors monsters will be a problem.”

I asked Roxanne, and her answer gave me a peace of mind.
No need to waver.
It is possible to let her fight one or two floors lower if I removed Hero, Great Hero, and Jobless though.
And I can even go further down if used Wizard magic instead of Great Wizard magic.

I can add bonus points to increase the intellect power, but I can’t adjust it to negative to reduce the power.
There is also the problem of overcrowding if we go down in Quratar’s labyrinth.
Since we have Rutina as a Wizard, there is no problem if it is known that our party fights using magic.

If someone passed by and observed us from behind, even if they see the afterglow of fire magic, they will probably judge that Rutina cast it.
Rutina joining us is a splendid advantage.
Perhaps Rutina didn’t notice that.

“I feel relieved because even if someone saw us by chance using magic we have Rutina, but it doesn’t particularly need to be on a lower floor?”
“You are right.”
“It is thanks to Rutina.”

I praised Rutina who showed slight self-doubt sometimes.
Rutina shows a slight wondering face.
Is it because she wasn’t recognized as a fighting force?
But she only needs to be here.

“I didn’t join the magic guild either, and I think it is better that man doesn’t know that I was able to use magic after only half a day.”

Rutina asked Sherry after pondering.
Is Sherry in charge of that part?

“You are right, regarding the guild. As for being able to use it in half a day, it is possible to interpret that it happened by chance.”

“As far as I know, he’s never come across us in the labyrinth.”
“Wouldn’t that be bad.”

I see.
Is there any suspicion from such a place?
But it will be alright if any subordinate of the Dukes doesn’t see us.

Sherry and Rutina appear to be worried about information leaking.
Sherry said something that sounded more like threatening Rutina.
Also Rutina, even though she hardly knows anything about a Labyrinth, she’s sharp in unusual matters.

“I will be careful. You did well in recognizing it.”
“Politics is entirely strategy. Strategy means information. If I can’t get hold of any information, I won’t be able to enter the Lord’s meeting.”
“R-really?”
“Scheming is the way of life for Aristocrats.”

It’s like the Art of War.
Is this what’s called Dishonest means of troops?
Is the lord’s meeting about cheating each other?
Rutina seems to be unexpectedly terrifying.

Chapter 198 - Teamwork

I pull myself together and adjust my magic power to beat the monsters half-dead on the 10th floor.
It's generally better and not difficult.
The preparations get done quickly.

"Then, I intend to have Rutina experience light combat on the 10th floor, too."
"Okay. If it's me, it'll be alright."
"First, try fighting with Sherry's spear. If the Needle Wood doesn't collapse after I cast a spell, try to kill the monster with the spear."
"I understand."

I give Rutina instructions.
A spear, which can be used from a distance, will be better at the start.
The spear is the one Sherry uses.
It'd be troublesome to exchange with me after I cast a spell.

"Roxanne, can you search for a place with a Needle Wood?"
"Okay, that's a good idea."

The monster that appears the most on Quratar's 10th floor is the Escape Goat; however, that one would be troublesome since it tends to run away.
And, it would be better to avoid the poisonous 9th floor monster, Nt Ant.
That leaves us with the 8th floor monster, Needle Wood.
A Needle Wood, however, is able to use magic.

By the way, I cannot have her fight the 11th floor monster, Green Caterpillar, since it spits thread.
If the 11th floor monsters could be one-shot, it would be a great place.

If that's the case, should I have moved to a lower floor and use Wizard spells?

The 2nd floor would be relatively more crowded.
Considering Rutina, that might actually have been better.

Rutina attacks the Needle Wood, which Roxanne found, after it endures a spell of mine.
She doesn't seem to have any problem even on the 10th floor.
Because we have a full party, and there are the effects of my Great Hero, too.
Thereafter, I have her try a sword and a club.

"Well done. Lastly, although it'll be a little difficult, I want you to fight bare-handed."
"Bare-handed?"
"It'll be a good experience."

Fighting bare-handed is a requirement to acquire Monk; however, I said it'll be a good experience.
Rutina receives a few attacks but manages to kill the Needle Wood safely.
Since I cast Heal and apply Plating on her every time, there's no problem.
Because I knew Roxanne would shoot it down, I had changed my job to Monk beforehand.

While casting Heal after the battle ends, I check her status.
Since she isn't showing a painful expression, she should be fine, no?
Because I'm having her carry a rucksack in the labyrinth, it may be difficult for Rutina to fight as it's essentially her first time inside the labyrinth.
Since I have put a black magic crystal inside her rucksack, I feel relieved when she defeats a monster.

"Thank you very much."
"Next will be a special way of killing a monster. Roxanne will take on the monster from the front while you throw the poison stingers, which have been collected from the Nt Ants, and kill the monster with via abnormal status of poison."
"I understand."

I have her try the poison stingers.

“Roxanne, please.”
“Yes. It’ll be fine, though, even if it’s not particularly a Needle Wood. However, an Escape Goat won’t work since it’ll run away.”

Recommends Roxanne.
It won’t be a problem for she’ll be able to avoid the attacks from an Nt Ant.
Quite a confidence she has.
Rather, isn’t it a fact?

“That’s a great idea.”
“An Nt Ant isn’t far from here.”

Well, it should be fine since she herself wants to do it.
Roxanne takes on the Nt Ant that shows up.
Roxanne easily dodges the continuous attacks from the Nt Ant.
Rutina throws a poison stinger from the side.

“Did it, desu.”

She continues to throw until Miria calls out.
Has the poison been inflicted?
As always, I’m unable to get it.

For Rutina was about to continue throwing, she didn’t seem to notice either.
So, it cannot be that only my eyes are bad.
Roxanne doesn’t let the poisoned Nt Ant graze her until it collapses.

The only test left after this is throwing a liver and transform a monster into a Drive Dragon; however, there’s no need to do that. It doesn’t seem to grant any job, after all.
Besides, it’d be scary to create a Drive Dragon on the 10th floor.
And, it’d be troublesome on the 1st floor since it tended to be crowded.

“Let’s leave it at this?”
“I’m not going to kill them using only magic?”

Enquires Rutina.
Because she has killed them with a spear and a sword, should magic be next?

It's surely an option available to Rutina since she's a Wizard.
It's not necessary, though.

There's no job acquired by killing an enemy using magic.
Or, is killing a monster with magic perhaps a requirement for acquiring Grand Wizard?
Well, she'll soon be able to kill them anyway.

"There's no particular need."
"Since it's your first day, and since you're only experiencing the battles today, this much would do."

Roxanne approves, too.
Is it important to let her experience it since it's her first day?
I don't really get it.

Oh well. She seems to be able to fight properly. It'll help Rutina build her confidence.
It'd better than spending the night depressed.

"Then, let's call it a day. We will have the dinner later. Miria, since you're going to cook a whole fish, make a nitsuke[1]."
"Ooh! Yes, desu."

To celebrate Rutina becoming a party member, let's have a whole fish for dinner.
However, it may also be taken as a celebration for Rutina falling into slavery.
In this world, a whole fish doesn't seem to be a food that implies an auspicious occasion.
Auspicious occasion sounds like a pun here.[2]

It gives the impression of a festive occasion since it's a rare ingredient.
I believe it's good to celebrate not just the festivals.
I invoke [Warp] and leave the labyrinth behind.
We move to the Adventurer's Guild.

"Oh, it has been a while."

When I leave the guild, I come across the hardware store aunty.
She was the intermediary when I rented the house.

“Good day.”
“Hee, you seem to be faring well. It was worth leaving the house in your care.”

It feels like greeting a neighbor aunty on the way back from shopping.
Like a neighbor aunty, huh? Actually, she IS a neighbor aunty.
By ‘doing good’, was she referring to my becoming an Adventurer since I came out of the Adventurer’s Guild?
Or, was she referring to my owning more slaves?
Back then, I had only Roxanne.

“That time…”
“Because I haven’t seen your members decreasing, you don’t seem to be using them in a despicable way. Some people use them as a meat shield in order to advance to unreasonably high floors.”

It seems to be the latter.
I have heard about using the slaves as a meat shield from Sherry.

“There’s no way I’ll do something like that.”
“Of course. You have beauties that make even a woman like me envious. Are you going to go shopping?”
“Yes.”

When I affirm that I’m going to go shopping, the aunty bows her head and withdraws easily.
I wonder if she understands that not much time is left until evening.

“I’ve heard people earn varied income upon becoming an Adventurer. Is that really true?”

I hear her mutter as she leaves.
So, it seemed to be the former, too.
Although I’m an Adventurer now, she must’ve thought I was close to becoming an Adventurer when I rented the house. However, isn’t it strange for her to not have talked about it when I rented the house?

It could be figured out if I were an Explorer Lv49 from the size of my Item Box.
I wonder if such a talk isn’t allowed when renting a house.

Or, she perhaps thought I hadn't decided to become an Adventurer when I rented the house.

Not everyone becomes an Adventurer upon reaching Explorer Lv50.
You will have to start over from Lv1 if you choose to become an Adventurer. Besides, An Explorer's Item Box can expand more than an Adventurer's.
There seem to be many people who opt to remain an Explorer.
Since I have now acquired Adventurer job, there'd be no problem even if they thought I were an Adventurer.

Finished with the shopping, we return home.
After returning home, I must first prepare the bath.
I wonder if Rutina will somehow join in with us.

I wonder.
Isn't there any trick I can use?
It may be a good idea to prepare the bath together with her before taking a bath with her.
It'll be my first collaboration.

If Rutina helped first, she would feel more comfortable taking a bath.
How about slipping accidentally into the bathtub while preparing it?
Or, jumping into the bathtub immediately after preparing it?
That will probably not work, I guess.

"Master, there's a message from Mr. Luke. He seems to have bid successfully on a Caterpillar Monster Card."

When we return home, waiting for us was Luke's message, not the bath.
Caterpillar Monster Card, huh?
Because Rutina had joined as a member, I actually wanted a Goat Monster Card.

"Got it. Tomorrow would do."
"Okay."
"It's regarding an order for a monster card I placed with an auction broker."

I explain to Rutina who didn't seem to understand.

“So, it was about that? Caterpillar Monster Card……”
“It grants Sacrifice skill.”
“Umm, by any chance, is that because I’m wearing it?”

She anxiously asks.
Rutina seems to think I have ordered another because she’s using one.

“Ah, not at all. Don’t worry about it.”

It’s better to vaguely deny it.
She’ll figure it out anyway.
Until then, I can demand gratitude.
It’d be a different matter if I denied clearly.

“I understand.”
“Sherry will definitely succeed.”
“Eh?”

Rutina seems to be aware of the possibility of Monster Card Fusion failing.
For she seemed surprised when I said Sherry would definitely succeed.

“Then, I’ll go prepare the bath. Since Rutina can use magic, would you like to help me?”

She’ll get it right away if I have her do it.
Let’s move to the next task without pulling her too much.

“Ah, yes. What am I supposed to do?”
“Come with me.”
“Okay.”
“Have a good time.”

Roxanne and the girls see us off as I head to the bathroom with Rutina.

“Rutina, have you taken a bath before?”
“Yes, about once every four or five to ten days. It’s an etiquette being the daughter of a noble.”

She knows what a bath is, after all, since she was an earl's daughter.
I have heard from Roxanne that a bath is a luxury meant for nobles.
By 'etiquette', does she mean she has to keep herself clean being an earl's daughter?

"In our house, we do it more frequently."
"There seemed to be many who liked to take a bath. As for me, I had no particular interest."

I try to brag about how frequently we take a bath, but she dodges it.
I thought she would be happy.
However, it doesn't seem to have gone the way I thought it would.
If I handled it untactfully, I would be treated like a freak.

We enter the bathroom.
Being alone in a small bathroom with a beautiful girl makes me kinda nervous.
I was a little familiar with Roxanne and other members; however, it's a little different in Rutina's case since she's not a sex slave.
Should I push her down here? Nope, I can't, really.

"This is the bathtub we use."
"So huge."

Rutina mutters in amazement once we enter the bathroom.
Nah, I know.
I know it's the bathroom which she meant was huge.
I haven't even undressed yet.

I know.
I know, really.
I was just a little lost in thought being alone with a beautiful girl in the bathroom, and then she said 'so huge'.
I've committed it to the memory.

"We fill the hot water here. Rutina can start off with producing water using [Water Wall]."
"Moreover, it's magical hot water."

I set Intermediate Water Magic as Jobless skill and select Wizard

job.

“It feels so.”

I first cast [Water Wall] only.
I’m required to use more Water magic than Fire magic while preparing the bath.
It’ll be better to use Water magic of Jobless skill and Rutina.

“I understand.”
“Was the bath, which Rutina used to enter, small?”

I ask a question to keep the conversation rolling.
However, Rutina starts chanting the incantation.
So, is it impossible to have a conversation while preparing the bath?
Since it cannot be helped, I overlap a [Burn Wall] and an [Aqua Wall], and line a [Water Wall] up on the opposite side.

This is the best way to maximize the heat produced by Fire magic.
It would be more effective if Rutina’s Water magic merged with mine; nevertheless, so far so good.
Rutina completely chants the incantation and manifests a [Water Wall], too.

“With this, I can clearly see the difference.”

And then, she mutters something.
I manifested the [Water Wall] on the opposite side so Rutina wouldn’t be able to notice; however, was it not enough?
Since I used both Fire and Water magic, it was clearly discernible, so there’s no helping it.
The type of magic we are using differs.
I fill the hot water in the bathtub silently.

“You don’t need to overdo it.”

I thought she would stop after two or three attempts; however, Rutina continues to cast, so I warn her.
Since she is safe here at home, should I let her test the limit of her MP?
Nah. Since her Wizard was leveling up quickly, I’d better stop her.

“No, even I-”
“My bad.”

She persevered plenty, though.
Isn’t she about to hit two digits?

“I’m sorry. I cannot go on any more than this.”
“Thank you.”
“Not at all. I wasn’t of much help to you.”
“You have only just become a Wizard, so it was amazing of you to do this much. Besides, you worked really hard.”

We have already filled about half of the hot water.
Because I don’t need to chant incantation, I cast almost twice as many spells as Rutina did.
Since I could cast three spells at once, it was actually six times.

“Is Michio-sama still able to cast more spells? I wonder if I have any talent.”

She seems to have persevered until her MP reached critical level.

“I’m able to do this much after training. Since I’ll do the rest, you can go help Roxanne and the girls.”
“Okay.”

I send Rutina back.
Because she needed to chant incantation, we couldn’t deepen our relationship through teamwork.
Will she be joining in with us?

Notes

1. Fish or vegetables simmered in soy sauce

2. Medetai – means an auspicious event. タイ – Tai – means a sea bream

Chapter 199 - A Useless Human Being

Having prepared the bath, I head to the kitchen, too.
What helped me prepare the bath without needing to restore MP halfway through was the effect of having a Wizard, Rutina, in the party; also, the effects of Jobless and the leveled up Great Hero.
It turned out quite well.

“It was easier preparing the bath thanks to Rutina. I’ll count on you from now on.”
“Yes, thank you very much.”

I speak to Rutina in the kitchen.
With five girls inside the kitchen, even a flower may blossom.
It may get a little cramped, though.
Nope, it’s no good, is it?

“I hope I won’t have to trouble Roxanne from now on.”
“It was never a nuisance.”
“I understand. Thank you.”
“Yes.”

I thank Roxanne for everything she has done thus far.
In the kitchen, the course I’ll be making is the dessert.
Because it’s hot, it’ll be good to make a jelly to cool down.

“Vesta, can I ask for your help?”
“Okay.”
“Squeeze this for me.”

I pass the fruit that I bought.
Vesta squeezes it. After dissolving the gelatin with fruit juice and sugar, I’ll chill it.
Squeezing it is easy thanks to Vesta’s great strength.
It’s better to leave such tasks to her.

“By the way, what’s with such a huge bathtub?”

Rutina, who was helping someone out by chopping the vegetables, speaks.
It's a continuation of the conversation left off in the bath.

"The bathtub we had in our home was like a barrel; it was long and narrow. It was difficult to boil the water in it. We had to bathe one at a time."
"Huh, is that so?"

I wonder if it was a drum can bath.
Would it require less quantity of hot water?
But the capacity wouldn't change even if it were laid down.
Nope, it would be difficult sleeping inside it.

"E-Excuse me."
"What?"
"Since it's so big, does everyone really enter together?"

Rutina asks quietly.
I wonder if she'll join in together with us.
What should my answer be? I have to give it some thought.

If possible, it would be nice if I answered like it's a matter of fact.
It's natural for us to enter together, is there something wrong with it?
Something along the lines.

"Of course we do. Is there something wrong with it?"

Shit!
I answer her just that.

"R-Really?"
"Master washes our hair."

Roxanne, nice follow-up.
No, is it really a nice follow-up?
Well, even if she were reluctant about my wiping her body, washing her hair would be fine.
Because she didn't say I wash their bodies, it's a nice follow-up.

"It's also a waste of time to separately take a bath."

Sherry's follow-up is great, too.
It'd take time If we entered individually.
Truly rational.

"You can understand the feelings of a fish if you enter the bath, desu."

That's not a follow-up.
Only you, Miria, would be interested in understanding the feelings of a fish.
Wait, can you really understand the feelings of a fish?

"Lying down in the bathtub with everyone feels comfortable. I think it's alright."

It really is comfortable.
For me, especially.

"Is that the way it is?"

Being tricked! She's being tricked!.

"That's right."
"However, I feel like the information is biased."

She has noticed.
She is being careful not to be deceived at not just the Lords' Assembly.
The situation requires me to change the topic.

"Vesta, I'll make ice. Crush it, please."
"Okay, understood."

I manifest an [Ice Wall] and have Vesta shave it.

"Rutina, when you're done with cutting, can you help me out?"
"Ah, yes."
"Please."

As for the bath, it'll be better if everyone enters normally.
I could enter by myself, too; however, there's no need to go to that extent.
I will enter together with everyone as usual.

It’s normal.

“Is this a kind of Aspic[W]?”

Rutina asks as I submerge a cup of jelly in ice.
Does it look like Aspic?
It’s a gelatin based French cuisine.
I’ve heard the name of the cuisine, but I have never eaten it before.

What’s the side dish then? Tom Yam Kung[W]?
Or Chaliapin Steak[W]?
I have only eaten Pirozhki Curry Buns[W].

Even though it wasn’t an authentic one, I have eaten Mapo Tofu[W], too.
I have also eaten conveyor belt sushi……nope, nothing.
My eating habits were poorer than I thought.

“It surely has similar feeling to it.”

Sherry answers in my, who doesn’t know what Aspic tastes like, stead.
Have you eaten it before, Sherry?

“Is this the way it’s made?”

I don’t know as to how Aspic is made. Rutina seems to be interested in it.
I bury the jelly I made in ice.
By the time the dinner is over, it’ll be chilled and ready to eat.

“I wonder what kind of dish is Aspic.”

Asks Vesta.

“I haven’t eaten it either.”
“I have eaten it before. It’s delicious; it leaves a deep flavor in your mouth.”

Rutina sticks her chest out.
I wonder if it’s tastier than a normal broth because it’s a jellied broth.
I think I know the reason for its deep flavor.

“Hee, is that so?”
“Then, does Rutina know how to make it?”
“N-No, I don’t know how to make it.”

Rutina panics.
You fool.
See where boasting got you to.

“I don’t think it’s something impossible to wish for Vesta who has gotten used to eating the dishes here.”

Sherry, who seems to have eaten it before, replies.

“Really?”

Vesta seems to be convinced, too.
Well, just don’t make unreasonable requests.

After waiting till Sherry’s soup was ready, we start the dinner.
The side dish is the stir-fried meat and vegetables, which Roxanne made, while the main course is the whole fish nitsuke[1] made by Miria.
Everyone surrounds the dining table quietly.

“I am grateful for the toil and tribute of everyone. I receive this with love.”

I cannot get used to Rutina’s prayer before a meal.
However, Rutina’s eating figure looks beautiful.
Especially the whole fish nitsuke. The way she lifts it on the back of the knife and carries it to her mouth is just so beautiful.

She opens her cherry lips slightly, puts the fish in quickly.
The piece on the knife, without making any sound, disappears inside her mouth.
The beautiful girl’s small jaws move up and down, masticating the food.

What a refined movement.
I want to be eaten, too.
I want to go inside that mouth of yours.
I want you to chew me.

“Is something wrong?”

Damn!
I’ve been staring too much, it seems.

“What do you think about the whole fish nitsuke?”
“Yes, I got to eat something delicious. It’s in no way inferior to the whole fish served by our cook in the past when we invited a special guest.”
“We eat it quite frequently in this house. It’s Miria’s favorite; it’s her specialty.”
“Specialty, desu.”

Was I somehow able to deceive her?

“Frequently……”
“Although I said that, it’s obviously not everyday.”
“Sadly, desu.”

I regret.
If it were everyday, I’d get fed up.

“But I heard it’s a rare ingredient.”
“We enter the labyrinth, after all. We catch it directly from time to time.”
“I see. It must take quite some time then. So, you’re a gourmand, huh? I really have gotten myself under the care of an outstanding person.”

It doesn’t take that much time, really.
It’s all thanks to Cook’s skill and Roxanne’s ability to locate Ma Breams.
If it were only that, I wouldn’t mind the misunderstanding; however, what does she mean by gourmand?

Apparently, Rutina sees me as a person with a strange hobby.
A gourmand on top of a bath enthusiast.
I’m an extremely useless human being.

Who loves to wake up late in the morning to a drink followed by a bath.
Who cannot help but have a beautiful slave girl serving him.

It’s reasonable.

Having had the main course, we partake of the dessert.
I distribute the cups of jelly.
The Jelly hasn’t gotten very cold, but it has solidified properly.

“Then, will everyone be entering the bath after eating?”

There’s no reaction from Rutina.

“That’s right. Everyone will be entering.”
“Y-Yes, I understand.”

Ooh
When Roxanne says ‘everyone’, Rutina agrees to it.
As expected of Roxanne.
She seems to possess an impressive persuasive power.

“Well then.”

We’re finished eating the *puropuro* jiggly dessert.
Would I get to have a *puropuro* jiggly dessert in the bathroom, too?
Will it be *puropuro* jiggly?

“This… can definitely be called a dessert.”

Yes, Mademoiselle.
It’s jiggly.
I’m pretty sure it’s jiggly.

“Yes, we get to eat it every now and then after the dinner.”

Vesta explains to Rutina.

“So, he’s a gourmand, after all……”

That’s some image of me.
After I was finished eating, I head to the bathroom alone.
I so want to see Rutina stripping, but it’d be better if I weren’t present.

I believe in Roxanne and the rest; hence, I leave it to them.
They will surely bring her to the bathroom.

In the bathroom, I take my clothes off ahead of everyone.
While Roxanne and the girls were doing the dishes, I adjust the bath temperature.

Because the temperature of the hot water was about right, the adjustment gets done immediately.
Un
I'm bored.
Should I lather the soap while I wait?

Lathering the soap while I waited, I hear the footsteps outside.
Come!
Come!
They've come!

"Excuse us."

The door opens, and Roxanne enters.
Popping up in front of my eyes are two enormous fruits.
Although it's different from what I was waiting for, it's wonderful.

Following behind her are Sherry, Miria and Vesta.
Fruits bigger than even Roxanne's.
Following behind Vesta comes in Rutina who's shyly covering her body.

A glossy, white, smooth skin like a white porcelain.
This is Rutina.
This is an elf.

"Y-You said everyone enters together, so I came, too."

Sadly, Rutina doesn't mutter 'so huge' when she enters the bathroom.
Because she has already seen the bathtub once.
I've made a mistake.
It would perhaps have been better had I not let her help me out, had she not seen it before.

"Rutina's skin is very smooth."
"Silky, desu."
"I think it's smooth."

“Thank you very much.”

Rutina does seem to have a beautiful skin.

“Is your skin smooth perhaps because you are an elf? Are all the elves the same? Also, your chest seems to be big. We, dwarves, are taught to be wary of elves. It doesn’t seem to be wrong, after all. I hope you perish.”

A certain someone is spitting venom.
So, Rutina does have a big-in-its-own-right chest, after all, huh?

“Umm, that’s because I polish it. I don’t think it’s the same for all the elves. Besides, everyone’s skin is beautiful. Also, Vesta-ane-sama’s chest seems to be much bigger.”
“I heard from Master that the bigger the chest of a Dragon Knight, the more athletic they are.”
“Is that so?”
“It seems to be so. However, aside from Vesta, who has air sacs, mumumu”

What’s with the ‘mumumu’.
I give up.
Disregarding the girl’s talk transpiring between the four behind me, I wash Roxanne’s body.

I have to do it in order.
It’s all thanks to Roxanne that Rutina entered the bath. I cannot neglect this fact.
Rather, I love what’s in front of my eyes.

Outrageous.
I’ll wash it.
I’ll wash it until it perishes.
It must perish.

“Looks good. This much is fine.”

I must polish this divine body every day.

“Thank you very much.”
“Next is Sherry’s turn.”

Holding Sherry's lovely petite body and washing it feels great, too.

"By any chance, do you happen to wash everyone like this?"
"That's right. Because he's a kind master."

Roxanne, who's still smeared in soap, talks to Rutina.

"But that would be a waste of time."
"You're going to receive a body wash from Master. You must accept it with gratitude."
"Hii, y-yes."

As expected of Roxanne-sama.
Thereafter, I wash all the nooks and crannies of every member's body. I thoroughly enjoy Rutina's skin, too, especially the places which I skillfully left uncovered while applying the soap.

White skin.
White breasts.
I fully enjoy her.

I enter the bathtub after everyone washes my body.
Cannot help it being cramped with everyone inside.
Actually, no. Being cramped feels rather great.
The contrast between Vesta's healthy, light brown skin and Rutina's enchanting, white skin looks beautiful.

"I think it'll be fine for Rutina to sleep in the bed today."

Roxanne, whose silky tail I was stroking, says from beside me.

"Bed?"

Rutina seems to have heard her.

"You should gratefully sleep in the bed. You must sit up straight and accept it."
"Y-Yes."

Roxanne cuts off any possible objection from Rutina.

"Right before sleeping and immediately after waking up, you must greet Master. Missing it isn't acceptable."

By ‘greet’, she probably means ‘that’.
Everything will be fine if I leave it to Roxanne.
I won’t end it at just the greeting, of course.
It’ll be Sex Maniac’s turn.

Notes

1. Nitsuke – vegetables or fish simmered in soy sauce

Chapter 200 - GRB

Amidst the dizziness resulting from Sex Maniac, I greet the morning listlessly.
Pleasant.
I'm in a good mood.
Everything feels great at the moment.

The softness of the bed.
An icy cold air circulating overhead.
Roxanne's supple breasts. Vesta's refreshingly cool body.

Seeing Rutina's fabulous body last night felt great, too.
As if a white body emerging in the night ocean.
Her enchanting body bewitchingly moving to match my movement.
Writhing to melt in the night.
She was quite happy even though it was her first time.

There was, of course, no way it would end with just one round.
As you would expect from a Sex Maniac.
It'd be fine even if I did them a hundred times.

Don't worry, I didn't do her 20 times.
I'd better keep it as little as possible since it was her first time.
The point is, if I have Sex Maniac I can go on forever.
It's such a relief.

Roxanne pays me the morning greeting when I wake up.
As if to dampen the lingering taste from last night, it's a gentle – not hot – and devoted kiss.
I surrender myself to her and gladly accept it.

"Good morning, Master."
"Morning, Roxanne."

I separate my lips from hers after enjoying it fully.

"Good morning."

Next is Sherry.
I accept the big devotion of her small tongue.
Thereafter, Miria and Vesta greet me in order.

“The last one is Rutina.”
“Yes, Roxanne-ane-sama.”

Told by Roxanne, Rutina comes over.
The bed was big enough even for six people.
Rutina was sleeping next to Vesta who was next to Sherry.

Her soft lips touch mine gently.
Rutina’s mouth moves stiffly.
Her attitude doesn’t suggest denial, though. It’s just that she’s still not used to it.
She seems to earnestly be trying to accept my tongue.

This time, I exploit it.
Rutina’s tongue not moving was really a good thing. I shove my tongue into and violate her mouth until I was fully satisfied.

“Good morning, Rutina.”
“Good morning, Michio-sama”
“Then, should we change and go to the labyrinth?”

After enjoying plenty, I part my mouth from hers and announce.
It’s the same heading to the labyrinth after morning greeting as usual. Nothing out of ordinary.
It’s our normal routine.

I get down from the bed, grope for and put on the equipment.
We’ve been doing it every day without turning the lights on.
It’s something which we’ve gotten used to.

“Thank you very much.”
“Onee-chan, desu.”

As I was thinking as to whether Rutina, who wasn’t used to it, would be doing fine or not, I find Miria helping her out.
If there’s anyone who can move freely in the dark, it’s Miria.

“I’m sorry for being slow since I haven’t done it much.”

Rutina seems to, as expected, be the last one to get ready.
By ‘haven’t done it much’, does she mean she had a lady attendant changing her clothes?
If so, I would love to be the one helping her change.
However, she may also mean she has never put the equipment on since she has never entered the labyrinth before.

“Then, let’s move to the labyrinth. Miria, great job.”

I praise Miria for she assisted her in changing clothes this time.
I’ll add a fried fish dish to tomorrow’s dinner.

I invoke [Warp] and jump to Quratar’s 26th floor.
Today, we’ll be kicking it off from here.
Because she had already observed the 26th floor yesterday, we proceed immediately after a brief observation to the 27th and 28th floor.

“If it’s me, I’ll be alright. Let’s go ahead.”

Because the 28th floor appeared okay, we quickly arrive at the 29th floor.
It’s the floor where we were originally fighting at.
However, it’s time for the boss battle.
“The 29th floor is where we were originally fighting at. We’ll be fighting for real from now on. We have never moved up the floors as fast as this before.”
“Okay, I understand.”
“Because Rutina has only just joined, I would like to observe for today and tomorrow. What do you think?”

I consult with Roxanne.
Rather than consulting, isn’t it more like making a call?
It has thus far been a rule to observe for two days to ensure there’s no problem in advancing.

Actually, one day would do since we have already repeated the 29th floor boss battle for one day.
Roxanne would definitely suggest moving up right away.
But that would be tough, surely.

“You’re right. That’ll probably be better.”

I have received Roxanne’s consent.

“Then, let’s do that. Also, Rutina, if you sense even a slight danger, please let us know. From here on, we’ll be moving up a floor every two days.”

Rutina is surprised.

“Is something wrong?”
“Every two… days?”
“If no problem comes up today and tomorrow, we’ll move on to the 30th floor. And then we will move to 31st two days after tomorrow if we don’t encounter any problem for the said two days.”

Because she didn’t seem to get it, I explain it in details.

“Do you move up every two days?”
“We do if there’s no problem on current floor in our present condition, and we stop before it gets dangerous. Therefore, if you feel danger, by all means, say so.”
“U-Understood.”
“I’ll be counting on you.”

Also, it’ll be easier for Rutina, who has only just joined, to speak up.
I expect her to be a Stopper.

“Anyways, are you really advancing a floor every two days? I thought you had an incomplete party, though.”
“We can still afford it, but we have to eventually stop somewhere.”
“Yes. No, Even I-”

Since she’s starting to show signs of motivation herself, Rutina should be alright.
For now, let’s try to fight.
The 29th floor wasn’t that hard. Rutina doesn’t seem to have encountered any problem either.
We have only been moving up one floor, after all.

However, we haven’t received any area of effect magic attack on the 26th, 27th or 28th floor.

Isn’t it better to receive an attack here?
Since the objective of repeating a boss battle is to completely shut out the boss battle, we may probably not move to the next floor until we have received the attack.

“In case of normal 29th floor monsters, cast two [Water Storm]s. If I don’t use magic, you’ll cast zero spell; if I use magic, you’ll cast two, please.”
“I understand.”

I brief Rutina on casting spells.
Usually, against Moloch Tauruses, I reduce the number of my Thunder spells by 1 while Rutina seems to cast 2 Water spells.
Since the combination of monsters appearing on the 29th floor isn’t complicated, it’ll be fine to give her the instructions beforehand.
Fire is the only attribute which Moloch Tauruses, Cyclopes and Scissor Lizards are resistant to.

We manage the battles on the 29th floor smoothly.
Although I have removed Wizard, nothing has changed in comparison to before. Actually, the pace of the battles seem to be even better.
It’s all thanks to Rutina joining; also, the job effects of Great Hero and Jobless.

“Here it comes.”

It takes us quite some time to receive an area of effect magic attack.
It’s a trap not to advance even though we’ve been able to fight smoothly.

“There’s no problem with the 29th floor area of effect magic attack, is there?”

After tidying up all the monsters, I confirm with Rutina.
Although we received an area of effect magic attack, there was no problem in killing them.

“Yes. If it’s me, I can go on.”
“Although it’s the boss battle, since it’s the 29th floor, there’s no problem, right?”

Because Rutina seems to be fine, I consult with Roxanne.
Rutina has yet to experience a boss battle.
Having her receive the boss attack intentionally would be harsh. Besides, there's no particular meaning in doing it.
We are basically here to fight the boss, not to receive its magic.

Hmm?
Shouldn't I try to receive a magic attack from the boss every now and then?
Advancing to higher floors without receiving one and then suddenly finding the magic attack of a boss extremely strong.

Such a thing won't happen, right?
I haven't heard such a thing from Sherry, though; also, the bosses will become common after the 33rd floor.
As for the area of effect magic attack of a normal monster, I can receive it while walking from the small room, where I move to via [Dungeon Walk], to the boss room.
Wouldn't it be enough to judge it based on that.

"It should be enough hereon."

I'm only receiving positive comments from Roxanne regarding the battles.

"Shouldn't we stay here for two days?"

As I was about to face Rutina and ask her, she turns to me and asks first.
Although it's abrupt, I'm saved.
She seems to have heard the conversation between Roxanne and me.

"For the time being, let's repeat the boss battle for two days."

"Although we can afford to advance in our current state, we'll repeat the boss battle for two days and see, nonetheless. At any rate, we won't be able to advance unless we try the boss battle."

Rutina seems a little surprised upon repeating the boss battles.
So, there's no such precedent, after all, huh?

Most likely not.
If there were anyone who could do that, it would be Roxanne.
In the first place, it was Roxanne who brought up the idea of repeating the boss battles.

“The boss room is on the other side. There’s not much distance.”

We are yet to be there, though.
Or rather, considering the fact that we’re heading to the boss room and the number of battles, it should be close by.

“Are we really going to repeat the boss battle? If I’m not mistaken, the difficulty of the boss battle increases when you repeat it.”
“You’re not mistaken.”

Rutina and Sherry converse.

“Not only have I never heard of anyone repeating the boss battle, I have heard about parties that never partake in the boss battles.”
“Such a thing doesn’t happen at our house. Also, unlike an order of knights, we don’t follow anyone.”

I was wondering as to how they move up if they don’t partake in the boss battles; however, I just recalled that you can pay the Explorer at the labyrinth.
As for the order of knights, seniors and superior officers assess your ability and direct you where to fight.
I don’t feel there’s a difference, though, between repeating the mob battles on higher floors and the boss battles on lower floors.

Considering such situations as stepping into a monster filled room or getting surrounded by the monsters, repeating the boss battles on lower floors sounds better.
Also, the number of monsters in the boss battle is fixed.

“I’ve heard you need to brace yourself for the boss battle since it’s too hard.”

Is it a matter of psychology?

“It’s not that difficult in case of our party.”

After all, we have someone who can dodge all of the normal attacks from the boss.
Reliable, safe and secure.
What Sherry said is unmistakably correct.

“There’s no need to brace ourselves when it’s merely a 29th floor boss.”

Roxanne bluntly says to Rutina.
How can she say such an absurd thing?
Maybe she herself meant it as an advice?

“Ooh, no. Wait.”

I have Roxanne, who was leading us to the boss room, stop.
I have an idea.

“Is something the matter?”
“There’s something I want to try. Let’s go to the 23rd floor boss room.”
“Experiment?”

Experiment is important, you know?
Well, Roxanne has never said she has gotten fed up with it.
It’s just to confirm.
To be certain.

Or, maybe she has already given up on me?
No, it can’t be.
I’m being paranoid.
There’s no way this cute Roxanne would hate her master.

“For just a bit. If you heard it, you would be surprised; if you saw it, you would be dumbfounded. Also, it won’t be bad for Rutina to experience a boss battle on the 23rd floor.”
“Very well.”

I manage to convince her and move to the 23rd floor.
We sweep the small fries and enter the waiting room.

“It’s your first time, so it’ll be fine for you to freely observe. However, the experiment may fail, so be prepared to fight.”

I psyche Rutina up for the boss battle.

“Okay.”
“Just in case, I’ll have Vesta keep the sword. It’ll be better this way for a while. Especially, I may need to use it this time. If I asked for the sword, you would have to hand it over to me immediately.”
“Understood.”

I bring Durandal out and hand it to Vesta.
Ever since we started repeating the boss battles, I stopped preparing Durandal beforehand.
It’s a waste of bonus points.
Most of the bosses end up petrified by Miria. I eventually bring Durandal out, though, when it does happen.

Either way, it’ll be better to have Durandal until Rutina gets accustomed.
Especially this time. If the experiment doesn’t go per expectation, I may need Durandal.
I complete the preparations in the waiting room.

Earlier, when we were hit by an area of effect magic attack, Rutina didn’t have [Plating] applied on her.
I cannot afford to select Alchemist during the boss battle.
Rutina will soon be able to cope without [Plating], too.
Our objective is to shut out the boss battle.

I decide against selecting Gambler for this experiment.
It’ll make things difficult for Miria, but I cannot help it.
I want her to do her best.
I open the door once the preparations were done and enter the boss room.

“Rutina, standby close to Sherry. I won’t mind even if you hit it with the stick if you can.”
“I understand.”

I give instructions to Rutina and brace myself.
The smoke gathers, and the monsters emerge.
Well, let’s get it started then?

“Breath of the star, burn to nothingness, accelerate to the limit of light, burst motion — Gamma Ray Burst!”

I chant the incantation of the bonus spell I had selected.
It’s Gamma Ray Burst.
I should be able to cast it as I am now.

Credits

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